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AN  
ENQUIRY  
INTO THE  
DUTIES OF THE FEMALE SEX.

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BY THOMAS GISBORNE, M. A.

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THE NINTH EDITION, CORRECTED.

LONDON:

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## P R E F A C E.

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**T**H E following Work owes its origin to the favourable reception which the Public has been pleased to give to the “Enquiry into the Duties of Men;” and to wishes intimated from different quarters very deserving of attention.

That I might have a reasonable chance of laying before the Reader a performance not destitute of all claim to originality; I purposely abstained, until the principal part was executed, from the perusal of other Treatises addressed to persons of the Female Sex, or primarily designed for their

instruction. I then thought it incumbent upon me to examine various works of that nature. The result proved as was to be expected. I found many opinions coinciding with my own, many differing totally from them. The latter circumstance led to alterations, wherever reflection convinced me that I had been in a greater or a less degree under the influence of error; and to additions, when they appeared necessary for the support of my own sentiments, and the matter in question seemed important enough to require them. On such occasions, however, my object has been to furnish useful rules and just conclusions, with a brief explanation of the grounds of them; rather than to point out and censure the individuals, who, in my apprehension, have recommended proceedings which ought to be shunned,

or have rested judicious maxims of conduct wholly or in part on improper motives. In one or two instances I have been obliged, for the sake of perspicuity, to state with plainness the objectionable position. But I have been solicitous not to load a practical work with controversy.

YOXALL LODGE,

Oct. 18, 1796.

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AN  
ENQUIRY  
INTO THE  
DUTIES OF THE FEMALE SEX.

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CHAPTER I.

PLAN OF THE WORK EXPLAINED.

IN the outset of the present undertaking, it may be proper briefly to state the plan on which it is conducted.

The Duties of the Female Sex, in general, are the objects which it is proposed to investigate. The observations contained in the following pages will, in many cases, have an especial reference to the conduct of women placed in the higher or in the middle classes of society; but they will seldom be directed exclusively to any rank or station. It is my wish, and it will be my endeavour, that this treatise, as far as it is capable of being useful, may be useful to readers of every description.

The sphere of domestic life, the sphere in which female exertion is chiefly occupied, and female excellence is best displayed, admits far less diversity of action, and consequently of temptation, than is to be found in the widely differing professions and employments into which private advantage and

public good require that men should be distributed. The barrister and the physician have their respective duties, and their respective trials. The fundamental principles by which both the one and the other is to regulate his conduct are the same. The occasion, however, on which those principles are to operate, and the enticement, whether of pleasure or of interest, by which their present effect is impeded, and their future stability endangered, are continually presenting themselves to each in a shape corresponding to the pursuits in which he is busied, and the objects most familiar to his attention and desire. But the wife and the daughter of the former, are scarcely distinguished, as such, by any peculiarities of moral obligation, from the persons standing in the same degree of relationship to the latter. The discriminating lines, unless their number or their strength be increased by circumstances not necessarily resulting from the profession of the husband or the father, are few, obscure, and inconstant. The same general truth might be exemplified in a variety of additional instances. Even the superiority of rank which elevates the peeress above her untitled neighbour, though it unquestionably creates a difference between their respective duties, is far from creating a difference equal to that which subsists between the duties of an hereditary legislator and those of a private gentleman. Such being the general similarity in the situation of women, differing in some respects from each other in outward circumstances, or even placed in separate classes of society; I purpose to couch in general terms the remarks about to be offered on the conduct of the female sex. But I shall at the same time be studiously solicitous to point out, whenever a fit occasion shall intervene, the most prominent of those instances in which the moral activity and the moral vigilance of the human mind are to be guided into particular channels, in consequence of some particularity, either in the station of the individual, or in the rank or profession of her nearest connexions. The peculiar temptations of the



capital, and those of the country, will also receive the distinct consideration which they deserve.

Marriage draws a broad line of discrimination, separating the female sex into two classes, each of which has moral duties and trials peculiar to itself. A writer, therefore, whose inquiries, in whatever manner they may be carried on, shall relate to the whole circle of feminine duties, will almost inevitably find himself constrained to consider the duties of married women in some measure apart from those of the single. Yet he will not fail to perceive, on the slightest attention to his subject, that there are numerous rules of moral obligation which attach equally on women of either class; rules which respect fundamental principles of action, dispositions of the heart, the cultivation of the understanding, the employment of time, and various other particulars essential or subservient to excellence and usefulness of character. How then is he to avoid tedious and unprofitable repetition in the reflections which he makes, and the advice which he offers? By determining, previously to the commencement of his work, the plan of composition and arrangement most favourable, in his judgement, to perspicuity and impressiveness; and then, by inserting such observations as are applicable both to single and matrimonial life in that part of his performance, in which, whether it relates chiefly to the married or to the unmarried, they severally will best accord with the general scheme already settled. I have to request my readers of all descriptions, uniformly to bear in mind, that such is the principle on which I conceive it advisable to proceed.

As my design in the present work is to promote, as far as may be in my power, the welfare of the female sex: an error or temptation becomes entitled to notice, when it is one to which women are exposed, though they should not be exposed to it in a greater degree than the other sex. In animadverting on subjects of this description, I may not always

be found to have observed, when the observation would have been reasonable, that the animadversion might be extended to men. Sometimes too, in speaking of failings which prevail in the female world, I may neglect expressly to state, when I might state with truth, that there is a large number of individuals who are exempt from them. Let not the former omission be ascribed to partiality, nor the latter to the injustice of indiscriminate censure. I shall be generally solicitous to express myself so as to preclude the possibility of such suspicions. But it may be better even to incur a small risk of occasional misconstruction, than to weary the reader with a perpetual recurrence of qualifying and explanatory phrases.

The observations advanced in the subsequent chapters will not, I trust, appear to the generality of those who may peruse them, the less deserving of regard, in consequence of being ultimately deduced from scriptural authority. To such persons as, rejecting that authority, have imbibed opinions concerning female duties, and the standard of female excellence, at variance with those which christianity inculcates, let me be permitted to recommend, antecedently to every study and to every pursuit, a deliberate and candid examination of the evidence of a religion, which promotes human happiness by the holiness and wisdom of the principles and rules of conduct which it furnishes for this life, as well as by affording to the sincere Christian grounds of hope and consolation, through a Redeemer, in looking forward to another world. And such of my readers as confess the divine origin of the Gospel, and in consequence acknowledge the duty of regulating their actions by Christian rules, I would remind of two circumstances, which appear to be among the causes that most powerfully impede the influence of religion in this country. First; that numbers, who regard themselves as acting conformably to the dictates of Christianity, are by no means in the habit of examining with sufficient care, whether

the rules by which they act are truly Christian rules, that is to say, expressly contained in the Gospel, or fairly deducible from it. And, secondly ; that they scarcely consider at all that a conformity even to right rules cannot be expected to be available in the sight of God, except it proceeds, in proportion to our knowledge, from Christian views and dispositions ; from a profound reverence and grateful love for our Supreme Benefactor, and, an earnest desire to obey and please him in every action, and thus habitually to live not unto ourselves but unto Christ who died for us.

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## CHAPTER II.

### GENERAL GROUNDS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FEMALE CHARACTER BRIEFLY STATED.

IN the course of a work which purposes to investigate somewhat at length the several duties of the female sex, the importance of the female character will naturally disclose itself. It is not by studied panegyric, but by delineating in detail the various and momentous duties, to the discharge of which women are called both by reason and revelation, that the influence of feminine virtues will be rendered most conspicuous. It is thus too that the responsibility attached to that influence in all its branches, in all its minutest capacities of being beneficially employed, will be placed in the strongest light ; a circumstance of no small efficacy as to precluding the emotions of arrogance and the confidence of self-sufficiency which are ever likely to be produced by simple eulogium. The general contempt, therefore, which is sometimes manifested respecting women by persons of the other sex, and most frequently by persons who are the least capable of

forming a judgement concerning those whom they profess to despise, would not have induced me to make any preliminary observations on the subject. There is, however, a prejudice which it is desirable to remove without delay, because it is found to exist in female minds, and unavoidably contributes in proportion to its strength, to extinguish the desire of improvement, and to repress useful exertion. The fact is this: young women endowed with good understandings, but desirous of justifying the mental indolence which they have permitted themselves to indulge; or disappointed at not perceiving a way open by which they, like their brothers, may distinguish themselves and rise to eminence, are occasionally heard to declare their opinion, that the sphere in which women are destined to move is so humble and so limited, as neither to require nor to reward assiduity; and under this impression, either do not discern, or will not be persuaded to consider, the real and deeply interesting effects, which the conduct of their sex will always have on the happiness of Society. In attempting to obviate this error, I should be very culpable were I to flatter the ambitious fondness for distinction, which, in part at least, may have given rise to it. To suggest motives to unassuming and virtuous activity, is the purpose of the following brief remarks.

Human happiness is on the whole much less affected by great but unfrequent events, whether of prosperity or of adversity, of benefit or of injury, than by small but perpetually recurring incidents of good or evil. Of the latter description are the effects which the influence of the female character produces. It is not like the periodical inundation of a river, which overspreads once in a year a desert with transient plenty. It is like the dew of heaven which descends at all seasons, returns after short intervals, and permanently nourishes every herb of the field.

In three particulars, each of which is of extreme and

never-ceasing concern to the welfare of mankind, the effect of the female character is most important.

First; In contributing daily and hourly to the comfort of husbands, of parents, of brothers and sisters, and of other relations, connexions, and friends, in the intercourse of domestic life, under every vicissitude of sickness and health, of joy and affliction.

Secondly; In forming and improving the general manners, dispositions, and conduct of the other sex, by society and example.

Thirdly; In modelling the human mind, during the early stages of its growth, and fixing, while it is yet ductile, its growing principles of action; children of each sex being, in general, under maternal tuition during their childhood, and girls until they become women.

Are these objects insufficient to excite virtuous exertion? Let it then be remembered, that there is another of supreme importance set before each individual; and one which she cannot accomplish without faithfully attending, according to her situation and ability, to those already enumerated; namely, the attainment of everlasting salvation, purchased through the blood of Jesus Christ, for those who walk in the spirit and precepts of his Gospel.

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### CHAPTER III.

ON THE PECULIAR FEATURES BY WHICH THE CHARACTER  
OF THE FEMALE MIND IS NATURALLY DISCRIMINATED  
FROM THAT OF THE OTHER SEX.

THE commander, who should be employed to ascertain for the security of the inhabitants of a particular country, the

most efficacious means of guarding the frontier against invaders, and of obstructing their progress, if they should ever force their way into the interior, would fix his attention in the first instance, on the general aspect of the region which he is called upon to defend. He would study the mountains, the defiles, the rivers, the forests. He would inform himself what quarters are open to inroads; what are the circumstances which favour the machinations, what the undisguised violence, of the enemy; what are the posts which the assailants would find it most advantageous to occupy; what the stations from which, if once in their possession, it would be most difficult to dislodge them. The plan of defence which he would prescribe, while, on the one hand, it would be formed on those fundamental principles, which military experience has established as the basis of all warlike operations, would be adapted, on the other, with unremitting attention to all the discriminating features which characterise the particular district, in which those general principles are to be reduced to practice.

A writer, in like manner, who ventures to hope, that in suggesting observations on the duties incumbent on the female sex, he may be found to have drawn his conclusions from the sources of nature and of truth, should endeavour, in the first place, to ascertain the characteristical impressions which the Creator has stamped on the female mind; the leading features, if such there be, by which he has discriminated the talents and dispositions of women from those of men. For it is from these original indications of the intention of Providence, taken in conjunction with the additional and still clearer proofs of the Divine will which the Scriptures shall be found to have disclosed, that the course and extent of female duties, and the true value of the female character, are to be collected.

In different countries, and at different periods, female excellence has been estimated by very different standards. At



almost every period it has been rated among nations, deeply immersed in barbarism, by the scale of servile fear and capacity for toil. Examine the domestic proceedings of savage tribes in the old world and in the new, and ask who is the best daughter and the best wife. The answer is uniform. She who bears with superior perseverance the vicissitudes of seasons, the fervour of the sun, the dews of night: She who, after a march through woods and swamps from morn to eve, is the first to bring on her shoulders a burthen of fuel, and foremost in erecting the family wigwam, while the men stand around in listless unconcern: She who searches with the greatest activity for roots in the forest; prowls with most success along the shore for limpets; and dives with unequalled fortitude for sea eggs in the creek: She who stands dripping and famished before her husband, while he devours, stretched at ease, the produce of her exertions; waits his tardy permission without a word or look of impatience; and feeds, with the humblest gratitude, and the shortest intermission of labour, on the scraps and offals which he disdains; She, in a word, who is most tolerant of hardship and of unkindness. When nations begin to emerge from gross barbarism, every new step which they take towards refinement is commonly marked by a gentler treatment, and a more reasonable estimation of women. And every improvement in their opinions and conduct respecting the female sex prepares the way for additional progress in civilization. It is not, however, in the rudeness of uncivilized life, that female worth can either be fitly apprehended, or be displayed in its genuine colours. And we shall be the less inclined to wonder at the perversion of ideas which has been exemplified on this subject, amidst ignorance and necessity, among Hottentots and Indians; when we consider the erroneous opinions on the same topic which have obtained more or less currency in our own country, and even in modern times. It would perhaps be no unfair representation of the sentiment which prevailed in

the last age, to affirm, that she who was completely versed in the sciences of pickling and preserving, and in the mysteries of cross-stich and embroidery ; she who was thoroughly mistress of the family receipt-book and of her needle, was deemed, in point of solid attainments, to have reached the measure of female perfection. Since that period, however, it has been universally acknowledged, that the intellectual powers of women are not restricted to the arts of the house-keeper and the sempstress. Genius, taste, and learning itself, have appeared in the number of female endowments and acquisitions. And we have heard, from time to time, some bold assertors of the rights of the weaker sex stigmatizing, in terms of indignant complaint, the monopolizing injustice of the other ; laying claim on behalf of their clients to co-ordinate authority in every department of science and of erudition ; and upholding the perfect equality of injured woman and usurping man in language so little guarded, as scarcely to permit the latter to consider the labours of the camp and of the senate as exclusively pertaining to himself.

The Power who called the human race into being has, with infinite wisdom, regarded, in the structure of the corporeal frame, the tasks which the different sexes were respectively destined to fulfil. To man, on whom the culture of the soil, the erection of dwellings, and, in general, those operations of industry, and those measures of defence, which include difficult and dangerous exertion, were ultimately to devolve, he has imparted the strength of limb, and the robustness of constitution, requisite for the persevering endurance of toil. The female form, not commonly doomed, in countries where the progress of civilization is far advanced, to labours more severe than the offices of domestic life, he has cast in a smaller mould, and bound together by a looser texture. But, to protect weakness from the oppression of domineering superiority, those whom he has not qualified to contend he has enabled to fascinate ; and has amply com-



compensated the defect of muscular vigour by symmetry and expression, by elegance and grace. To me it appears, that he has adopted, and that he has adopted with the most conspicuous wisdom, a corresponding plan of discrimination between the mental powers and dispositions of the two sexes. The science of legislation, of jurisprudence, of political economy; the conduct of government in all its executive functions; the abstruse researches of erudition; the inexhaustible depths of philosophy; the acquirements subordinate to navigation; the knowledge indispensable in the wide field of commercial enterprise; the arts of defence, and of attack, by land and by sea, which the violence or the fraud of unprincipled assailants renders needful; these, and other studies, pursuits, and occupations, assigned chiefly or entirely to men, demand the efforts of a mind endued with the powers of close and comprehensive reasoning, and of intense and continued application, in a degree in which they are not requisite for the discharge of the customary offices of female duty. It would therefore seem natural to expect, and experience, I think, confirms the justice of the expectation, that the Giver of all good, after bestowing those powers on men with a liberality proportioned to the existing necessity, would impart them to the female mind with a more sparing hand. It was equally natural to expect, that in the dispensation of other qualities and talents, useful and important to both sexes, but particularly suited to the sphere in which women were intended to move, he would confer the larger portion of his bounty on those who needed it the most. It is accordingly manifest, that, in sprightliness and vivacity, in quickness of perception, in fertility of invention, in powers adapted to unbend the brow of the learned, to refresh the over-laboured faculties of the wise, and to diffuse throughout the family circle the enlivening and endearing smile of cheerfulness, the superiority of the female mind is unrivalled.

Does man, vain of his pre-eminence in the track of pro-

found investigation, boast that the result of the enquiry is in his favour? Let him check the premature triumph, and listen to the statement of another article in the account, which, in the judgement of prejudice itself, will be found to restore the balance. As yet the native worth of the female character has been imperfectly developed. To estimate it fairly, the view must be extended from the compass and shades of intellect, to the dispositions and feelings of the heart. Were we called upon to produce examples of the most amiable tendencies and affections implanted in human nature, of modesty, of delicacy, of sympathising sensibility, of prompt and active benevolence, of warmth and tenderness of attachment; whither should we at once turn our eyes? To the sister, to the daughter, to the wife. These endowments form the glory of the female sex. They shine (a)

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(a) The conjugal and parental affection of the women among the North American Indians is noticed by Captain Carver, and by other writers who have described the savage tribes of the New world; and it appears the more conspicuous in those accounts, as the reader cannot avoid contrasting it with the sullen apathy of the men. In the late Admiral Byron's Narrative of the calamities endured by himself and his companions after their shipwreck near the Straits of Magellan, he records several very forcible and pleasing instances of compassionate benevolence shewn to them by the female part of the families of their Indian conductors; instances, which, like the former, appear with all the advantage of contrast. I will not multiply authorities and quotations on a subject neither doubtful in itself, nor likely to seem doubtful to the reader; but will produce, in the place of all further testimony, the unequivocal declaration of a man, who, like Ulysses of old,

— *Mores hominum multorum vidit et urbes;*"

had travelled with a mind bent on observation through widely-separated districts of the earth, and had experienced in almost all the countries which he visited the utmost pressure of misfortune. I give his evidence in his own words. "I have always remarked that women in all countries are

amidst the darkness of uncultivated barbarism : they give to civilized society its brightest and most attractive lustre.

The priority of female excellence in the points now under consideration, man is seldom undiscerning enough to deny. But he not unfrequently endeavours to aggrandize his own merits by representing himself as characterised in return by superior fortitude. In the first place, however, the reality of the fact alleged is extremely problematical. What if the female heart would recoil from the horrors of sanguinary combat ? The resolution which is displayed in braving the perils of war is, in most men, to a very considerable degree, the effect of habit and of other extraneous causes. Courage is esteemed the commonest qualification of a soldier. And why is it thus common ? Not so much because the stock of native resolution, bestowed on the generality of men, is very large ; as because that stock is capable of being increased by

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“ civil, obliging, tender, and humane : that they are ever  
 “ inclined to be gay and cheerful, timorous and modest ;  
 “ and that they do not hesitate, like men, to perform a gene-  
 “ rous action. Not haughty, not arrogant, not supercilious,  
 “ they are full of courtesy, and fond of society ; more liable,  
 “ in general, to err than man ; but in general, also more  
 “ virtuous, and performing more good actions than he. To  
 “ a woman, whether civilized or savage, I never addressed  
 “ myself in the language of decency and friendship, without  
 “ receiving a decent and friendly answer. With man it has  
 “ often been otherwise. In wandering over the barren plains  
 “ of inhospitable Denmark, through honest Sweden and  
 “ frozen Lapland, rude and churlish Finland, unprincipled  
 “ Russia, and the wide-spread regions of the wandering  
 “ Tartar ; if hungry, dry, cold, wet, or sick, the women have  
 “ ever been friendly to me, and uniformly so. And to add  
 “ to this virtue, so worthy the appellation of benevolence,  
 “ these actions have been performed in so free and so kind a  
 “ manner ; that, if I was dry, I drank the sweetest draught,  
 “ and, if hungry, I ate the coarse morsel with double relish.”  
 —See the account of Mr. Ledyard in the Proceedings of the  
 Association for making Discoveries in the interior parts of  
 Africa. London 1790, 4to. p. 44.

discipline, by habit, by sympathy, by encouragement, by the dread of shame, by the thirst of credit and renown, almost to an unlimited extent. The influence, however, of these causes is not restricted to men. In towns which have long sustained the horrors of a siege, the descending bomb has been found, in numberless instances, scarcely to excite more alarm in the female part of the families of private citizens, than among their brothers (*l*) and husbands. But fortitude

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(*b*) It would be easy to multiply examples from ancient historians to prove that, among nations imperfectly civilized, women have frequently encountered with unshaken fortitude the perils and vicissitudes of military campaigns. Examples more recent may be found even in our own country. Dr. Henry describing, in his History of England, (vol v p 545) the manners of the former part of the fifteenth century, observes, that “the ferocity of those unhappy times was so great, that it infected the fair and gentle sex, and made many ladies and gentlewomen take up arms and follow the trade of war.” He also quotes a writer of credit, who affirms that “many worthy ladies and gentlewomen, both French and English,” took part in the siege of Sens, during the year 1420; of whom “many began the feats of arms long time ago, but of lying at sieges now they begin first.”

The influence of habit, not merely in dissipating unreasonable alarms, but in producing that kind of courage, which ought rather to be called insensibility of danger, is, in few instances, more evident than in the fearless unconcern with which the skirts of Mount Vesuvius, and of other volcanos, are inhabited; and the alacrity with which districts repeatedly ravaged by eruptions are re-occupied. In these examples, the female mind appears to be rendered as devoid of apprehension as that of the men. In the late eruption of Vesuvius eighteen thousand inhabitants, driven from Torre del Greco by an inundation of lava, which took its course through the centre of the town, returned, ere the ruins were yet cold, to reconstruct their buildings; and positively refused the offers, repeatedly made to them by the Neapolitan Government, of a settlement in a less dangerous situation. We do not hear that the female part of the community solicited their relations of the other sex to accede to the proposal, or that they remonstrated against returning to the spot, from which the fiery deluge had expelled them.

is not to be found merely on the rampart, on the deck, on the field of battle. Its place is no less in the chamber of sickness and pain, in the retirements of anxiety, of grief and of disappointment. In bearing vicissitudes of fortune, in exchanging wealth for penury, splendor for disgrace, women seem, as far as experience has decided the question, to have shewn themselves little inferior to men.

With respect to supporting the languor and the acuteness of disease, the weight of testimony is wholly on the side of the weaker sex. Ask the professors of the medical art, what description of the persons whom they attend exhibits the highest patterns of firmness, composure, and resignation under tedious and painful trials: and they name at once their female patients. That a portion of this calm resolution may not be resolved, like some of the active bravery of the soldier, into the effects of discipline and habit, as women have in general less of robust health than men, I do not mean to contend. It has, indeed, been asserted, that women, in consequence of the slighter texture of their frame, do not undergo, in the amputation of a limb, and in other cases of corporal suffering, the same degree of anguish which is endured under similar circumstances, by the rigid muscles and stubborn sinews of persons of the other sex; and that a smaller portion of fortitude is sufficient to enable the former to bear the trial equally well with the latter. The assertion, however, appears to have been advanced not only without proof, but without the capability of proof. Who knows that the nerves are not as keenly sensible in a finer texture as in one more robust? Who knows that they are not more keenly sensible in the first than in the second? Who can estimate the degree of pain, whether of body or of mind, endured by any individual except himself? How can any person institute a comparison, when of necessity, as it should seem, he is wholly ignorant as to one of the points to be compared? If, in the external indications of mental resolution, women are not inferior to



men; is a theory which admits not of experimental confirmation a reasonable ground for pronouncing them inferior in the reality? Nor let it be deemed wonderful, that Providence should have conferred on women in general a portion of original fortitude, not much inferior, to speak of it in the lowest terms compatible with truth, to that commonly implanted in persons of the other sex, on whom many more scenes of danger and of strenuous exertion are devolved. If the natural tenderness of the female mind, cherished too, as that tenderness is in civilized nations by the established modes of ease, indulgence and refinement, were not balanced by an ample share of latent resolution; how would it be capable of enduring the shocks and the sorrows to which, amid the uncertainties of life, it must be exposed? Finally, whatever may be the opinion adopted as to the precise amount of female fortitude, when compared with that of men, the former, I think, must at least be allowed this relative praise: that it is less derived from the mechanical influence of habit and example than the latter; less tinctured with ambition; less blended with insensibility; and more frequently drawn from the only source of genuine strength of mind, firm and active principles of religion.

The reader will have been aware that the sketch, which I have endeavoured to trace in the preceding outlines, is that of the female character under its customary form; not under those deviations from its usual appearance, which are known sometimes to occur. It is our first business to settle the general rule, not to particularise the exception. But amid the endless diversity of nature; amid the innumerable multitudes of contemporary individuals, distinguished each from the other in their minds, no less than in their countenances, by stronger or fainter lines of difference, and thrown into a variety of situations and circumstances, severally calculated to call forth and improve particular talents, and encourage particular pursuits, exceptions will be frequent. Hence many

instances might be produced from each sex of persons who have possessed a more than common share of the qualities and dispositions, which in ordinary cases are found most conspicuous in the other. It might even be possible to state some examples of women, who have scarcely been surpassed by the most eminent men in depth and comprehensiveness of intellect ; and of men, who have nearly equalled their rivals of the other sex in quickness of fancy, in delicacy of sentiment, and in warmth of affection. There are also persons of each sex who are greatly deficient in those qualifications, by which it was natural to expect that they would have been chiefly distinguished. But all these cases are variations from the general course of events ; and variations on which, at present, it would be useless to enlarge.

Of the errors and vices which infest human nature, some are equally prevalent in the two sexes ; while others, in consequence of the peculiarities by which the character of the one sex is discriminated from that of the other, peculiarities which gain additional strength from the diversity in the offices of life respectively assigned to each, do not exercise an equal power over both. Thus, among women in whom feminine delicacy and feeling have not been almost obliterated, (I am not at present, taking religious principle into the account), intemperance in wine, and the use of language grossly profane, are nearly unknown : and she who should be guilty of either crime, would be generally regarded as having debased herself to the level of a brute. On the other hand, there are failings and temptations to which the female mind is particularly exposed by its native structure and dispositions. On these treacherous underminers, these inbred assailants, of female peace and excellence, the superintending eye of education is steadfastly to be fixed. The remains of their unsubdued hostility will be among the circumstances which will exercise even to the close of life,

the most vigilant labours of conscience. It is necessary, therefore, to be explicit on the subject.

The gay vivacity, and the quickness of imagination, so conspicuous among the qualities in which the superiority of women is acknowledged, have a tendency to lead to unsteadiness of mind; to fondness of novelty; to habits of frivolousness, and trifling employment; to dislike of sober application; to repugnance to graver studies, and a too low estimation of their worth; to an unreasonable regard for wit, and shining accomplishments; to a thirst for admiration and applause; to vanity and affectation. They contribute likewise to endanger the composure and mildness of the temper, and to render the dispositions fickle through caprice, and uncertain through irritability. Of the errors and failings which have been already specified, several are occasionally aggravated by the acute sensibility peculiar to women. Do we wonder that sensibility itself, singularly engaging and amiable as it is, should share the common lot of earthly blessings, and come not without its disadvantages? There are drawbacks not hitherto noticed, by which its attractions are found to be accompanied. It is liable to sudden excesses; it nurtures unmerited attachments; it is occasionally the source of suspicion, fretfulness, and groundless discontent; it sometimes degenerates into weakness and pusillanimity, and prides itself in the feebleness of character which it has occasioned. Blended with maternal fondness, it appears in some instances almost incapable of discerning a fault in children: and becomes fatally indulgent to their desires. In the intercourse of ordinary life it has been known to look for a degree of affection, perhaps of sudden affection, from friends and acquaintances, which could not reasonably be expected; and, under the impulse of groundless disappointment, to resent rather than cordially to accept, the manifestations of sincere and rational regard. And if in common it fills the heart with placability and benevolence; it is known at times



to feel even a slight injury with so much keenness, as thenceforth to harbour prejudices scarcely to be shaken, and aversion scarcely to be mollified.

In one instance, if not in more, the delicacy of the female frame contributes, in conjunction with some of the dispositions already mentioned, to lead astray the understanding. The consciousness of the want of bodily strength to repel violence disposes women to value too highly in the other sex the qualities of courage and spirit, to which they look for protection. Hence in part it arises, that they not only regard with admiration those exertions of fortitude, which are truly laudable; but are even heard to bestow applause on him, who, conforming to a brutal and senseless custom in defiance of the laws of God and man, exposes his own life, and seeks that of a fellow-creature, in a duel.

The most important of the consequences flowing from these causes will hereafter be the subjects of incidental observation. At present it is sufficient to have enumerated the causes themselves. But in this place it is necessary to add, that there remains another source of female errors and temptations, which has not yet been noticed, because it springs not from mental peculiarities; namely, the consciousness of being distinguished by personal attractions. The effects of this consciousness on the female character, which, if considered by themselves, are extremely striking; and in many cases are ultimately combined with those which result from the qualities and dispositions already specified, will receive farther notice in the progress of our enquiries.

## CHAPTER IV.

## ON FEMALE EDUCATION.

IN the preceding chapter some of the principal materials, on which the hand of education is to operate, were enumerated. The next object is to consider how they are to be employed.

The early attainments desirable to the one sex are in so many points the same, or nearly the same, with those which are important to the other, that several of the following remarks on the instruction of youth will necessarily be of a general nature. The culture, however, of the female mind is the point to which they will all be directed.

The primary end of education is to train up the pupil in the knowledge, love, and application of those principles of conduct, which, under the superintending influence of the divine mercy, will lead probably to a considerable share of happiness in the present life, but assuredly to a full measure of it, through a Redeemer's merits, in that which is to come. The secondary end is, to superadd to the possession of right principles those improving and ornamental acquisitions, which, either from their own nature, or from the prevailing customs of a particular age and country, are in some degree material to the comfort and to the usefulness of the individual. The difference in point of importance which subsists between these two objects is such, that the dictates not only of religion, but of sober judgment, are palpably abandoned, whenever the latter is suffered, in the slightest manner, to encroach on the priority of the former. The modes of attaining both objects, and of pursuing the second in due subordination to the first, require to be adjusted according to the circumstances which characterise the persons who are to receive instruction.

Hence, in female education, that instructor is ignorant or regardless of a duty of the highest concern, who, in transfusing into the youthful hearer those fundamental truths which equally concern every human being, does not anxiously point out their bearings on the particular weaknesses and errors, whether in judgement or in action, into which the female sex is in especial danger of being betrayed. An attempt to efface the discriminating features, which the hand of God has impressed on the mind, is in every case impossible to accomplish: and would be in every case, were it practicable, the height of folly and presumption. To efface those of the female mind, would be to deprive women of their distinguishing excellences. But to anticipate the mistakes, to restrain the excesses, to guard against the unwarrantable passions, which originate in the very source whence those excellences flow, is to confer on the workmanship of God the culture and the care which he intended that it should receive through the instrumentality of the hand of man. It is humbly to contribute towards the progress of its improvement that mite of assistance, which in the counsels of supreme wisdom, he thought fit to leave dependent on human co-operation.

Are we then authorised, in point of fact, to affirm, that in this country, and in the present times, the instruction of young persons of the female sex is generally carried on with a systematic and proportionate regard to each of the two purposes of education: and also, with lively and uniform solicitude to counteract the seductive errors and temptations, which derive much of their strength from the peculiarities of the female character?

As the education of girls is sometimes conducted at home, sometimes at a public school; any reply, which may be offered to the preceding question, must refer distinctly to both plans.

In the instruction of persons whom we believe to be destined to survive the stroke of death, and to survive in

happiness or in misery proportioned to the nature of their conduct in this short and preparatory scene of existence, the main object to be pursued is to inspire them with such views of things, to train them to such dispositions and affections, to establish them in such principles and rules of action, as are calculated to render that future and most important state of being, a period of blessedness. Such would still have been the dictates of reason, had the result been likely to be unfavourable to happiness in the present life. How forcibly, then, do they press upon those who are convinced, as is the case with all who believe in the Christian Revelation, that ‘godliness has the promise of the life which now is, as well as of that which is to come (c):’ that the very same views of things, the very same affections and dispositions, the very same principles and rules of action, which lead to never-ending felicity hereafter, promise in the common course of events a larger portion of external comfort than is attainable by any other means: and are accompanied by a serenity of heart, and by a cheerful sense of the protecting care of infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, which far more than outweigh the collected amount of all other terrestrial enjoyments. The chief solicitude, therefore, of every one, who is called to fulfil the duties of tuition, ought to be this; to engage the understanding and the affections of the pupil in favour of piety and virtue, and to detach the mind from that supreme love of worldly objects to which it is prone, by unfolding the truth, the importance, and the inherent excellence of the Christian religion: and by inculcating morality not as attainable by human ability without the Divine assistance, but as the fruit of Christian faith through the influence of the Holy Spirit: not as consisting in actions beneficial to society, without reference to the motives from which they proceed, but as flowing from an earnest desire to please the

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(c) 1 Tim. iv. 8.

Supreme Being by the exercise of justice and benevolence to man ; not as ultimately resting on independent principles and obligations of its own, but as founded on the precepts and sanctions of the Gospel, and forming one branch of human duty to God.

Is the truth of this position universally admitted ? It is not. By some persons, who, disdaining the maxims, to use their own style, of the vulgar herd of mankind, assert pretensions to superior intelligence ; and by others, who, from humility, from fashion, from thoughtless indolence, or from self-love suggesting extravagant ideas, as to the natural powers and dispositions of mankind, have acquiesced in the authority of the former ; an opinion precisely the reverse of this is maintained. We are told that the great business of Education is to guard the mind against the influence of prejudice : that of all prepossessions, those which respect religion are the most dangerous and the most enslaving ; the most easy to be imbibed in childhood and youth ; the most difficult, when once imbibed, to be shaken off in the maturity of the understanding : that religion is therefore a subject which ought never to be brought forward as a matter of instruction, but rather to be entirely kept out of sight during the course of education ; in order that the young person, when judgment shall have acquired sufficient strength, may weigh with unbiassed discernment the contending creeds which divide the well-informed part of mankind, and adopt that which shall be found conformable to reason and truth. Thus, it is asserted, and thus only, will belief be rational. Thus, and thus only, add some of the patrons of this opinion, who disclose, intentionally or unintentionally, the secret sentiment as to religion which the majority of them entertain, will the world be enabled to shake off the fetters of delusion, priestcraft, and fanaticism ; and children have a chance of being emancipated from the superstitions of their forefathers.

It will be proper to remove this obstacle before we attempt to proceed farther.

The human mind in infancy has been compared, and it may in some respects have been justly compared, to a blank sheet of paper. In one material point, however, the comparison fails. The sheet of paper deposited on a shelf, or locked up in a drawer, continues a blank; it acquires no impression of characters, until they are purposely imprinted by the hand of the writer. Is that the case with the youthful mind? If you forbear to impress it with ideas and sentiments, can you prevent it from receiving impressions from the persons and the objects with which it is daily conversant? As well might you forbid the calm surface of the lake to reflect the woods and rocks of the impending mountains. The mind, be it for a moment assumed, is originally an unsown field, prepared it may be, for the reception of any crop. But if those, to whom the culture of it belongs, neglect to fill it with good grain, it will speedily and spontaneously be covered with weeds. If right principles of action are not implanted, wrong principles will sprout up; if religion be not fostered, irreligion will take root. For the case unhappily stands thus: the soil, in its natural state, favours the growth of every noxious production. The experience of every one, who attends to the workings of his own heart, bears testimony to the truth of the scriptural doctrine concerning the inherent tendency to evil, the radical corruption, which characterises human nature. To keep the mind during a series of years in a state of perfect indifference as to the truth or falsehood of the prevailing religion of the country, would be impossible. And the common effect, were the scheme feasible, would be, that they who were brought up to the age of maturity without the slightest inclination to any particular religion, would either remain indifferent to all religion as long as they should live; or, more probably, become bitter enemies



of a Revelation irreconcilably adverse to the dispositions and habits which they would have acquired.

In the next place, let us be permitted to ask these declared enemies of every proceeding which may bias the youthful mind, whether they act up to their own principles. Do they inculcate on their own children no elements of knowledge, no motives of action, no rules of conduct? They will express surprise at the absurdity of the question. They will tell us, and they will tell us truly, and they will extend the observation to any topic which happens to be proposed to them, religion excepted, that to train up children without knowledge, without maxims of moral behaviour, lest their opinions on those subjects should be biassed, would be as unphilosophical as it would be to prohibit them from walking, in order that when arrived at years of discretion they might decide, uninfluenced by the prejudices of habit, whether they would travel on two legs or on four. They will tell us, that they recommend to their offspring whatever they themselves, as enquirers after knowledge, have seen reason to believe true, and have experienced to be useful; and that they also communicate the proofs of that truth and of that utility. It seems, then, that religion is the subject in which these enemies of prejudice, these enquirers after knowledge have discovered neither utility nor truth. Be it so. But why are not we, who believe Christianity to be both true, and superlatively useful, and likewise indispensably necessary, why are not we to recommend it to our children with earnestness corresponding to our conviction of its certainty and importance; and thoroughly to instruct them in the evidence on which that conviction is established?

The fact is, that whatever may be the speculations of eccentric and sceptical philosophers; among persons who believe and examine the Scriptures, not a shadow of doubt can remain on the point in question. In the sacred volume we meet with precepts conformable to the representation

which it gives of human nature as decidedly inclined to evil, and as finding no preservative from sin and punishment but in religion. We hear in the Old Testament the invitation of David: "Come, ye children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord (*d*)."<sup>(d)</sup> We hear Solomon thus addressing parents: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it (*e*)."<sup>(e)</sup> We hear the voice of God himself speaking thus in signal commendation of Abraham: "I know that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord (*f*)."<sup>(f)</sup> We hear the Almighty repeatedly admonishing the Israelites to be diligent in teaching their children his laws, and the wonders which he had wrought for their fathers (*g*).<sup>(g)</sup> The New Testament reiterates the same lesson. Our Saviour's reproof of those, who would not suffer little children to come unto him (*h*),<sup>(h)</sup> might of itself, incline us to forebode his displeasure against persons who, in future times, should not suffer them to come to the knowledge of his Gospel. But the point is not left to rest on presumptions. St. Paul, in expressly commanding children to "obey their parents in the Lord (*i*)," and because their obedience "*is well pleasing unto the Lord* (*k*),"<sup>(i)</sup> gives his decisive judgement, a judgement formed under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, that children ought to be instructed in the religion of Christ. In perfect conformity with this injunction the same apostle congratulates a favourite convert, because, to use his own words, "from a child thou hast known the Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith, which is in Christ Jesus (*l*)."<sup>(l)</sup> And in another place

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(*d*) Psalm xxxiv. 11.

(*f*) Gen. xviii. 19.

(*h*) Matt. xix. 14. Mark, x. 14. Luke, xviii. 16.

(*i*) Ephes. vi. 1.

(*l*) 2 Tim. iii. 15.

(*e*) Proverbs, xxii. 6.

(*g*) Deut. iv. 10. vi. 7—20; xi. 19.

(*k*) Coloss. iii. 20.



he expressly commands parents, in terms which alone would have been sufficient to decide the question, “ to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (m).”

From the result of such enquiries as I have been able to make on the subject, it appears that, in the generality of public seminaries and boarding-schools, this momentous object of religious instruction is by no means pursued either with proper earnestness, or in a judicious manner ; and that, in some, the attention which it occupies merits no better appellation than that of form, and serves only to impose on the parents of the children who are placed there, and to fill the young mind with contempt, or at least with unconcern, as to the most awful of all considerations. There may be particular exceptions : but that the state of the case, on the whole, both in the metropolis and in the country, accords with this representation, seems to be a fact, which unhappily, admits not of dispute.

On the want of due earnestness with regard to the inculcation of religion in public seminaries, I mean not to dwell at present : as I shall, ere long, be under the necessity of recurring to the subject, when the mode in which the objects comprehended under the second branch of Education are pursued, and the degree of attention which they in general receive, come to be discussed. The usual defect of judgment, in the manner of impressing the principles and injunctions of Christianity, appears to me to consist in these two circumstances. First, they are commonly inculcated in the form of a dry and authoritative lecture, without being placed in a full light and in their proper colours, without being applied and illustrated in such a method as to create a deeply-rooted conviction of the influence which they claim over every period and every action of life, or to interest the affec-

tions of the opening mind. Hence religion appears particularly dull and unattractive; and is rather dreaded as an austere monitor and a relentless judge, than loved as the giver of present and future happiness(*n*). Secondly, they are presented to the understanding rather as truths to be implicitly received on the credit of the teacher, and on the ground of their established prevalence, than as truths resting on the solid basis of fact and argument, and inviting at all times the closest investigation of their certainty which the mind is capable of bestowing. Hence, when a young woman begins to act for herself on the stage of life, and a growing confidence in her own judgement, together with the effect of new scenes and situations, lessens the estimation in which she once held the opinions of her instructors; it is scarcely possible but that her regard for religion, which, whether greater or less, was in a considerable degree derived from that estimation, must at the same time be impaired. And if she should be thrown, as in these days of widely-extended intercourse is not very improbable, into habits of familiarity with persons who in practice slight some of the injunctions of the Gospel, who are devoid of the general spirit which it inculcates, or who doubt or disbelieve its divine origin; is it wonderful that her faith should waver, when she feels herself at once allured by temptations, and unable to give one satisfactory reason for crediting the book which commands her to resist them? I am aware that during a certain period of

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(*n*) In some boarding-schools a general mode of punishment has been to oblige the offender to transcribe, or to get by rote, one or more chapters of the Bible. In some few cases, when the offence is a flagrant violation of a precept of religion, and the selected portion of Scripture relates immediately to the particular sin, the practice may be advisable. But, used as a general and indiscriminate method of punishment, it seems one of the aptest plans that could be devised to render the Bible odious to all the inhabitants of the school.

childhood it is requisite, no less in the case of religion than of other branches of instruction, that the truth and the propriety of many things must be received by the pupil on the credit of the instructor: because the mind is not then competent to judge of the proofs by which they are established. Yet even during that period, it seems to me generally desirable, and particularly on the subject of religion, that the pupil should be apprised both of this necessity and of the cause of it: and should be taught to expect that ample information will be afforded as soon as she shall become fully capable of understanding it. As the intellectual faculties expand, the more obvious proofs of revealed religion ought to be gradually developed. And, in the concluding years of education, the prescribed studies unquestionably ought to comprehend the leading evidences of Christianity, arranged with simplicity, but in a regular order; conveyed in familiar, but not uninteresting language; comprised within a moderate compass; and divested of learned references, and critical disquisitions (o).

When girls are educated at home, though in the article of religious instruction the two defects already specified are found to subsist in a considerable degree, it generally occupies more attention than it obtains in schools, and is conducted with greater judgement. In families in which just sentiments of Christian duty prevail, it is rightly deemed that first object of education, which, standing pre-eminent, by itself, excludes all others, not from equality only, but from comparison. Where Christian principles are less

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(o) If there should be no existing summary of the evidences of Christianity, which is entirely suited to the particular purpose in view, it could not be difficult to compile one from the excellent treatises on the subject already before the public. And I trust that some of those persons, who have so meritoriously distinguished themselves by works calculated to improve the course of female education, will be induced to undertake the task.

active, it is proportionally neglected. But if we assume, and in the majority of instances it will surely be no unfair assumption, that the mother is equally alive to their influence with the conductress of the school, to whom her daughter, if sent from home, would be committed : it is evident that the warmth and the solicitude of parental affection will impel her to such a degree of earnestness and diligence in pressing on her child those truths which she deems of the greatest moment to its present and eternal happiness as a stranger, urged by no such powerful motives, cannot be expected to attain. In the regulation of the temper, no inconsiderable branch of practical religion, the mother, to whom the peculiarities that mark the disposition of the child are thoroughly known, has a decided advantage over the school-mistress ; who has neither possessed the same opportunities of discovering them, nor is likely to study them with the same attention and perseverance ; nor is able with the same facility, to accommodate her settled modes of instruction to remedy the evils which she detects. And as to the prospect of success in discerning and applying suitable methods of winning the heart to the side of piety and rectitude, the superiority of the mother will in most cases be still more apparent. For though in communicating knowledge on subjects which address themselves exclusively to the understanding, she may not be altogether equal to a person trained by long experience in the profession of teaching ; yet in every attempt to render knowledge amiable in the eyes of the pupil, and to lead the affections to bear their reasonable part in preparing the heart for the service of God, and animating it with the desire of diffusing happiness among mankind, she will come to the undertaking with advantages, which no one but so near a relation can enjoy. That instructor who is loved the best will commonly prove the most efficacious. In every point which has been specified, but especially in the last, the mother will be found to derive from her unrivalled claim

to the fond attachment of the child, an influence far exceeding that of any other teacher. These circumstances of superiority, all of which, be it remembered, relate to the most important of human concerns, afford a general and very strong ground of preference to the domestic plan of education for the female sex, whenever the adoption of it is practicable, and consistent with other duties. It must be observed too, that, when children are brought up at home, to guard them from being closely entangled in the pernicious society of those who are not so well principled as themselves, is seldom a very difficult task. In a boarding-school the task would be impracticable. Thrown into the promiscuous multitude of good and bad, your child will form her intimacies not with such as are the most deserving, but with such as are the most agreeable. And if they, whom she selects for her associates and friends, unite, and the union is not uncommon, agreeable qualities with the indulgence of bad dispositions; she can scarcely fail of being corrupted by evil communication. Such is the unhappy propensity of the human heart to evil, that one worthless girl is sometimes found to contaminate the greater part of a school.

But in whatever place, and in whatever manner, religious instruction be communicated, let it be addressed to the heart no less assiduously than to the understanding. The obedience which God requires is a cheerful obedience: not that which proceeds merely from the conviction of the judgement, but that which flows also from the decided bias of purified inclinations, and is at once the performance of duty and the perception of delight. Let religion be painted in the attractive colours which belong to it. Let it not however be misrepresented or disguised, with the hope that in appearance it may thus be rendered more amiable. The scheme is as foolish as it is needless and criminal. Let the truth be fully disclosed. Let the awful sentence denounced against the unrepenting sinner be impressed no less strongly than the rewards



prepared for the righteous. Let it not be dissembled that a life of holiness, "without which no one shall see the Lord," is a life of watchfulness and exertion; and has difficulties insuperable without assistance from above. But let the undeserved and unparalleled love of God to man be continually and distinctly developed. Let it be exemplified as extended to the pupil herself, and to every individual, in the gift of life; in daily and hourly preservation and support; in the pleasures resulting from the grand and beautiful works of Creation; in the stupendous mercies of redemption, the expiation of sin, the sanctifying aid of divine grace, the recovery of life and happiness everlasting, purchased by the death of Jesus Christ. Let it be shewn, that if sorrow be the lot of humanity, the fatherly chastisement is designed for the ultimate good of the afflicted. Let it be shewn that, if numbers have to look forward to misery hereafter, it is because they will not repent and be saved; and that "it is not the will of our Heavenly Father, that any one of his children should perish."

In the cultivation of the female understanding essential improvements have taken place in the present age. Both in schools and in private families there prevails a desire to call forth the reasoning powers of girls into action, and to enrich the mind with useful and interesting knowledge suitable to their sex. The foundation is laid by communicating to the scholar a rational insight into the formation and idioms of her native tongue. The grammatical blunders, which used to disgrace the conversation even of women in the upper and middle ranks of life, and in conjunction with erroneous orthography to deform their epistolary correspondence, are already so much diminished, that in some years hence it may perhaps no longer be easy to find a young lady who professes to be mistress of the French language, and is at the same time grossly ignorant of her own. Geography, select parts of natural history, and of the history of different nations, ancient or modern, popular and amusing facts in astronomy and in

other sciences, are often familiar to the daughter in a degree which, at the very moment that it delights the parent, reminds her how small a portion of such information was in her youth imparted to herself. Of the books, also, which have been published within the last twenty years for the purpose of conveying instruction to girls, though some of them approach too nearly to the style and sentiments of romances, a considerable number possesses great merit; and most of them are abundantly more adapted to interest the young reader, and thus to make a lively and permanent impression on her understanding, than those were to which they have succeeded. Some improvement, too, though certainly not so much as is desirable, appears to have taken place in the choice of French books used at schools and in domestic education (*p*). And learners of that language are perhaps called upon less frequently than was heretofore the case, to convert the exercises of religion into French lessons (*q*).

If we estimate the peculiar advantages of private and of public tuition, supposing each system to be practicable, with respect to the instruction of girls in the various

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(*p*) It is to be hoped that some very improper French works, formerly admitted into seminaries of instruction, will soon be altogether excluded. Such have heretofore been in complete possession of every school-room, and still retain their place in some.

(*q*) The practice of requiring children to employ French Prayer-books and Bibles in accompanying the officiating minister through the English service, ought to be universally abolished. Its effect is to withdraw the mind from every sentiment of devotion, and to make the acquisition of a few foreign words and phrases rank higher than the heartfelt performance of public worship. It may be possible that persons of complete proficiency in the French language might use the books in question without distraction of thought or diminution of religious fervour. But this is not the proficiency of children.



branches of useful knowledge ; those attending the former plan will be found to preponderate. For when that system is adopted, the instructors are commonly under the superintendence of the parent of the pupil, or of some person of the family who possesses much of the authority of a parent ; and are thus kept up to a higher standard of active exertion than is generally to be expected in a school. And as their attention is confined to a very small number of pupils, perhaps to an individual ; their exertions are likely to be more productive than those of another person possessed of equal qualifications, but obliged to distribute her labours over a numerous class. It may be added, that a teacher, whose care is restricted to three or four, perhaps to fewer scholars, will probably feel a greater degree of responsibility as to their advancement, and a fuller conviction that her own credit depends on the event, than is usually felt by an instructress at a school with respect to any particular scholar. The former, resting her character on the success of a single instance, is impelled to bestow proportionate diligence upon it. The latter, depending on the result of many, has less at stake in each. If the pupils of the former make slow progress, their deficiency cannot fail to be observed ; and they are the only contemporary testimonies of skill and diligence which she has to produce. The latter, if the improvement of some of her scholars be but small, may hope that their backwardness will escape notice in the crowd ; or, at least, that it will be noticed with little disgrace to herself among other and more favourable examples of her care. The former also, if she feels in an equal degree with the latter, a pernicious propensity very general in schools, to bestow pains chiefly on those children whose abilities and quickness point them out as most likely to do honour to their instructress, is much less at liberty to indulge it.

These points of superiority in domestic tuition over a public school must be counterbalanced, if they are to be

counterbalanced at all, by the beneficial consequences generally expected to result from the emulation which is commonly seen to take place where numbers are collected, and occupied in the same pursuits. For whatever weight might remain to be thrown into the opposite scale, were the best method of educating boys the object of enquiry; with respect to the instruction of girls, to which alone our investigation relates, there seems no other peculiar advantage, general in its nature and also considerable in its weight, to be alleged by the advocate of the boarding school. Blindness to the faults of the child, reluctance, proceeding from mistaken tenderness, to the exertions necessary for their correction, and unsteadiness as to school-hours, resulting from domestic incidents and habits; these and other circumstances which might be specified, though very serious evils whenever they take place, are surely not the common characteristics of parental management. If it be said that more skilful teachers are to be found in schools than can be obtained at home; it may be replied in the first place, that the assertion is by no means universally true: and in the second place, that when it is corroborated by facts, it can claim little influence on the present argument. For when a comparison is made between the benefits, which respectively characterise the systems of private and of public education; it cannot be supposed to extend beyond those cases, in which teachers of competent ability may be obtained on either plan. Now the beneficial consequences of emulation, as set forth by its ablest advocates, do not appear by any means sufficient, when fairly appreciated, to compensate the loss of the advantages which have been severally stated as accompanying the plan of domestic instruction. But it is farther to be observed, that these beneficial consequences, whatever may be their amount, are far from being unmixed with evils; with evils, I mean, that tend directly to lessen, in some respects, the collective quantity

of knowledge acquired at the school, and so far to counteract the very object in promoting of which the whole excellence of emulation is confessedly placed by those who are loudest in its praise. For when a spirit of competition has seized a school, how often does it happen that, while girls of talents and resolution are pushed on by their ardour to exertions which would not otherwise have been excited; and to exertions, be it remembered, which not unfrequently impair their health, constrain them to a cessation from the business of the class, and may prove ultimately to have impeded rather than to have accelerated their progress; those who are distinguished by diffidence and timidity, and those whose abilities are but slender, are depressed below their natural level? Conceiving, or learning by ineffectual trials, that they are unable to keep pace with the augmented speed of their former companions; and, too often, finding the encouraging favour of their teachers diminished in proportion as they need it the more, they become less and less anxious for the acquisition of knowledge, grow remiss and languid in the pursuit of it, and sink into listlessness, inactivity, and despondence.

Emulation, however, which from its influence on the acquisition of knowledge has necessarily called for attention in this part of our enquiry, must not be coldly dismissed without additional notice. Those of its effects, favourable and unfavourable, which have been already mentioned, are by far the least important of the consequences with which it is accompanied. Whatever may be thought by different observers, as to the cases and the degrees in which it enlarges the sum of intellectual attainments; yet, among those who possess and improve opportunities of judging from experience, there surely can be but one opinion as to the general result of its operation on the dispositions of the heart. The truth is, that of all principles of action it is one of the most dangerous. It stimulates and nourishes

some of the darkest passions of the human mind ; and subverts those motives, and undermines those sentiments and affections, which it is one main purpose of Christianity to inculcate and enforce. Self-conceit, a supercilious contempt of persons supposed, and often falsely supposed, of inferior attainments ; proneness to suspect teachers of being prejudiced and partial, and assiduous endeavours to conciliate their favour by finesse ; a secret wish that it were possible to retard the progress of successful competitors ; an envious desire to detract from their merits ; and a gradually increasing aversion to their society, and indifference to their welfare, are among its usual effects. But it will be said, that a tendency to these malignant feelings, these artful manœuvres, is inherent in human nature : and that it is unfair to load emulation with the guilt. In part the assertion is true. The embers of the evil exist deep within us, and will shew themselves under the most active and sagacious efforts to extinguish them. But emulation is the agent which, perhaps at every period of life, and undoubtedly in childhood and youth, most successfully fans them into a flame.

Are we not, then, to avail ourselves, it will be said, in the process of instruction, of the influence of comparison and example ? Is it not lawful, is it not beneficial, to apply to children a stimulus, which is applied without reproach and with visible advantage, to kindle ardour, to rouse exertion, and to confirm good conduct, in maturer years ? In the administration of public affairs, in the professional management of business, in the proceedings of domestic life, is it not with equal frequency and wisdom that models of excellence and patterns of demerit are set before men engaged in corresponding occupations : the former to excite them to virtue, the latter to deter them from vice ? Does not revelation itself authorize and sanctify the practice, when one sacred writer directs those whom he addresses to “ take the

“prophets for an example of patient suffering (*r*) ;” and another enjoins his converts to follow himself as an example (*s*) ; and repeatedly compares his own acquisitions with those of others who were employed in the same pursuits with himself, at one time declaring that in his youth, “he profited more than his equals in years (*t*) : and at another, that in his riper age he was not a whit behind “the very chiefest of the apostles (*u*),” inferior in no point, in labours and in sufferings more abundant (*x*)? To compare our own conduct and attainments with those of others, that we may the more clearly perceive our defects, and be incited to imitate a meritorious example, is a practice in many cases both justifiable and useful. It is consequently a practice fit to be recommended on suitable occasions, and with proper explanation, to those to whom we are to impart instruction. But to compare that we may imitate, is not the same thing as to compare that we may rival. And emulation includes, not in name only, but in reality, the idea and the spirit of rivalry. In this circumstance consists the danger and the mischief of the principle. Rivalship is the nurse of pride, of envy, of detraction, of malevolence. We are all prone to harbour unkind sentiments towards those by whom we feel ourselves surpassed, especially if we were for some time level with them in the race. We find it more easy to depreciate than to equal them. And to hate those whom we have injured, is one of those inherent dispositions of the human heart which are visible even in childhood. In the next place let it not be forgotten, that emulation, as called forth in schools, is commonly directed to subjects widely differing from those in which

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(*r*) James, v. 10.  
(*u*) 2 Cor. xi. 5.

(*s*) Phil. iii. 17.      (*t*) Gal. i. 14.  
(*x*) 2 Cor xi. 22, 23.



St. Paul and the other sacred penmen exhorted their disciples to endeavour to excel. It is not an emulation in humility, in patience, in charity, in piety, and holiness (y) ; but in skill, in languages, and other branches of knowledge: or more frequently, in merely ornamental accomplishments. The convert who strove, according to the Apostle's direction, to imitate the proposed pattern of Christian virtue, if he was truly influenced by that religious impression under which he professed to act, could not feel genuine emulation. The malignity, the spirit, of rivalry were excluded by the nature of the object in view, and of the motives which instigated the pursuit. So far was he from being vain of his progress in religious attainments, that the farther he advanced, the more conscious was he of the extent of his deficiencies, and the more humbled by that consciousness. So far was he from wishing that it were in his power actually to lower the excellencies of his fellow Christian with whom he compared himself, and from seeking to lower them in the estimation of others, that he rejoiced in promoting them, and displaying them for general edification. And if at any time he was himself made the instrument of advancing his brethren by his counsel and encouragement to higher degrees of virtue: he beheld with augmented joy the increase of their present lustre, and the prospect of an addition to their eternal reward. Is this

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(y) These are the points in which St. Paul sought, by praising the believing Gentiles, "to provoke the Jews to emulation," according to the expression in our Bible; or, as the original term (*παρὰ ζήλω*) might have been better rendered, "to excite them to zeal." If it be imagined that emulation, that a spirit of rivalry, as the term is properly to be understood, is countenanced by this passage of Scripture: let it also be remembered, that "emulations" (*ζηλοί*) are placed by the same Apostle in the dark catalogue of sins, which exclude from the kingdom of God. Gal. v 20, 21.

the temper of mind produced in schools and seminaries by emulation? Is the principle, which commonly produces the directly opposite temper, an agent safe to be employed either in a boarding-school or in a private family? Is it wise, is it Christian conduct, spontaneously and needlessly to incur so great a risk of fostering in the youthful breast those passions, which, even if they are combated in early years with the most anxious vigilance, will shew themselves but too powerful amidst the future struggles and competitions of life?

In carrying on every branch of education there is no practical rule more entitled by its importance to steadfast attention than this: that the pupil should be impressed with a conviction, that whenever she is directed to pursue a particular course of study, the direction is reasonable: in other words, that she should perceive the matter enjoined to be evidently useful in itself, or should be satisfied that it is required by competent authority. When the understanding is not ripe enough to comprehend the utility of the attainment, let the obligation of compliance be shewn to rest on the submission due to the decision of parents, and of those who stand in the place of parents; and let the duty of submission be clearly traced to that standard of rectitude to which the mind ought to be habituated from the days of childhood constantly and universally to refer—the revealed word of God. As the faculties open, let the advantages to be expected from the acquisition of the knowledge in question be proportionally unfolded. But in developing them let not the instructor fail to dwell on this frequently neglected lesson, that their use consists in the increased power and opportunities which they afford to their possessor, of recommending herself to her Maker's favour by manifesting obedience to his laws, and by doing good to her fellow-creatures; and that, for their faithful application to these purposes, she will stand responsible hereafter. When the diligence



of the teacher has stamped these principles, the fundamental principles of rectitude in all human conduct, on the breast of the scholar; then is the time, amidst unceasing care to refresh the impression whenever it seems in any degree to fail; then is the time to give that additional incitement to active exertion which may be derived from the influence of example. Then let those to whom that incitement is necessary, and to whom it may be addressed without danger, be exhorted to compare their own remissness with the diligence of their more industrious companions. But let them be distinctly and uniformly instructed that the object of the comparison is to discover their own deficiencies, in order that, on principles of duty, they may be corrected, not to enter into a personal contest for pre-eminence with the other party; that in contemplating superior merit, they are not to envy, but to admire; to copy, not to emulate.

To impart to the youthful scholar those acquisitions which are desired either considerably or entirely on the score of ornament, constitutes, as was stated in the outset, the second branch of Education. That this branch of education is not at present undervalued or neglected in our own country, is a fact, which even a slight knowledge of the general proceedings and opinions of parents in the upper and middle classes of society would be sufficient to establish beyond the probability of dispute. Two questions remain to be proposed. First, whether it is valued and cultivated too much: that is to say, whether it is kept subordinate, and sufficiently subordinate, to the primary object of instruction, the inculcation of those radical principles on which happiness, present and future, depends: and, Secondly, whether the prevailing modes of cultivating it are judicious; in other words, whether in the manner, of carrying it on, due regard is paid to the peculiar characteristics of the female mind, and to the impressions, the errors, and the dangers to which, in consequence of those native peculiarities, the scholar is

exposed? The answer which must be given to these questions, an answer to be deduced from general practice, not from some few scattered exceptions, is not the reply which it were highly to be wished that truth would have permitted to be returned. In schools, almost universally, and very commonly, I fear, in domestic tuition, ornamental accomplishments occupy the rank and estimation which ought to have been assigned to objects of infinitely greater importance. Not that the pupil, when this perversion of rational arrangement takes place, is expressly instructed that to acquire and to display ornamental attainments is the first business of life. Quite the contrary. She is probably told once in a week, perhaps somewhat oftener, that to do her duty to God and her fellow-creatures in the manner which the Bible enjoins, is the object of real consequence. But what is the effect of a dry precept heard periodically from the pulpit or in a lecture room, and coldly repeated on incidental occasions by a teacher, to the power of daily habit? If a girl is treated by her instructors, if she is taught to labour and to act in the way that would be reasonable, if to improve in personal grace, to study fashionable decorations of the body and of the mind, were the appointed purposes of her existence: if she is thus treated, if she is taught thus to labour and to act, and with dispositions inclining her, by a natural bias, to lean towards that persuasion; will a few short admonitions, formally interspersed and reluctantly heard, counteract the danger? Will it be wonderful if, when she shall be set at liberty from the restraint of superintendants, her conduct in life shall correspond to the way in which she was regularly accustomed to act, rather than to the proposition which she was occasionally directed to believe? Is it surprising that a young woman should give free scope to the desires, which she has ever been led to cherish; that she should practise the arts, in which her childhood was initiated? Is it surprising that she, when grown up, should

starve herself into shapeliness, and overspread her face with paint, who was trained at a boarding-school to swing daily by the chin, in order to lengthen her neck, and perhaps even accustomed, as sometimes has been the case, to peculiar modes of discipline contrived to heighten the complexion? If she was taught throughout the whole course of her education, though not by express precept, yet by daily and hourly admonitions which could convey no other meaning, that dancing is for display, that music is for display, that drawing and French and Italian are for display; can it be a matter of astonishment, that during the rest of her life she should be incessantly on the watch to shine and to be admired?

Let the importance of a rule which has already been suggested and the little regard which it experiences in many schools and in many private families, be my apology for recalling it once more to the mind of the reader. The pupil, whatever may be the subject in which she is instructed, should be led distinctly to understand, as early as her faculties are equal to the exertion, the general reasons for which it is expedient that she should attain that particular qualification, and the general purposes to which, when attained, it is to be applied. If there be any cases in which the observance of this rule is of especial moment, it is in those in which, from the natural peculiarities of the female character, there exists a more than common danger that the object for which the attainment is sought will be misconceived by the scholar; and that, in consequence of that misconception, or of other probable contingencies, the attainment itself will become in process of time, a source of formidable temptations. The ornamental acquisitions which have been specified, and other similar accomplishments included within the plan of female education, fall precisely within this description. Let the pupil, then, be thoroughly impressed with a conviction of the real end and use of all such attainments:

namely, that they are designed, in the first place, to supply her hours of leisure with innocent and amusing occupations; occupations which may prevent the languor and the snares of idleness, render home attractive, refresh the wearied faculties, and contribute to preserve the mind in that state of placid cheerfulness, which is the most favourable to sentiments of benevolence to mankind and of gratitude to God: and in the next place, to enable her to communicate a kindred pleasure, with all its beneficial effects, to her family and friends, to all with whom she is now or may hereafter be, intimately connected. In addition to this general view of the purposes of ornamental accomplishments, let any prominent advantage, by which one is distinguished from another, be noted with the degree of attention which it deserves. If, for example, the uses of music are explained! let not its effects in heightening devotion be overlooked. If drawing is the subject of remark; let the student be taught habitually to contemplate in the works of creation the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of their Author. If just conceptions respecting the end of these and all similar acquisitions are not sedulously implanted in the breast of the scholar; ideas of a very different nature will prevail. And when a young woman steps forth into active life, graced with splendid accomplishments, and possessed with an opinion that she is to employ them in outshining her associates and competitors; her proficiency may fitly be to those, who are truly concerned for her welfare, a matter of sorrow rather than of congratulation.

The mistaken opinions respecting the proper end of personal accomplishments, and the extravagant opinions of their worth, which either the inculcation of wrong principles on the subject, or the neglect of impressing those which are just, establishes in the youthful mind, extend their influence to all matters similar in their nature to such accomplishments, and capable of being united with them in pro-

moting one common purpose. Hence that fondness for the arts of dress and exterior decoration, to which the female sex, anxious to call in every adventitious aid to heighten its native elegance and beauty, feels itself inclined by an inherent bias, is stimulated and cherished in the years of childhood ; and instead of being sedulously taught to restrict itself within the bounds which reason and Christian moderation prescribe, is trained up to fill the largest measure of excess which shall be established by pride, vanity, or fashion. There are well intentioned mothers who urge the necessity of taking pains to encourage in their daughters a certain degree of attachment to dress, of solicitude respecting the form and texture of their habiliments, lest they should afterwards degenerate into slatterns. It would perhaps be not less reasonable studiously to excite in boys a relish for the taste of spirituous liquors, lest in process of time they should impair their health by abstemiousness. An ancient philosopher defined woman to be “ an animal fond of “ dress.” And the additional experience of two thousand years does not appear greatly to have invalidated his conclusion. It should seem, therefore, that with respect to this point, parental anxiety might repose its confidence on the unassisted energies of Nature. But farther : there is no rule of conduct in principle more objectionable, no method of proceeding in practice more unwise, than to guard against one evil by encouraging its opposite. The eagerness of man, ever desirous to obtain its end, or a part of its end, in the quickest manner, and aware how far the rapid influence of the passions outstrips the laborious operations of argument, is at all times, and on every subject, prone to combat error by rousing and cherishing emotions which lead to the contrary extreme. But the result of this mode of attack, whether it be directed against false opinions which infest religion and politics, or against those which prevail in the humbler concerns of private life, is always to be dreaded.



Either the mind is confirmed in its errors by perceiving the weakness of the means employed to expel them ; or, yielding blindly to the new impression, abandons its original misconceptions, only to become a prey to opposite illusions. Whatever be the enemy to be subdued, let him be assailed with justifiable weapons. Whatever be the poison imbibed, let it be encountered with its specific antidote. The danger which you fear, is it that your daughter may prove a slattern ? Impress her with the advantages, the duty, of neatness : train her in corresponding habits : teach her by precept, and, whenever occasion offers itself, by example, the disgusting effects of deviating from them. Attach her thus to the proprieties without tempting her to the vanities of dress ; secure the decencies of her person without ensnaring her mind.

Beauty is a possession so grateful to every woman, and yet so productive of hazards and temptations, that if a young person is thrown into life with her original wishes and opinions on that subject uncorrected, her instructors will have been negligent of their charge in a very important point. To remind her from time to time of the transitory and precarious duration of personal attractions ; to remind her, that elegance of form and brilliancy of complexion are bestowed without regard to intrinsic excellence in the possessor ; to teach her, that they who are admired chiefly on those accounts are either unworthy of being valued for better reasons, or are admired only by persons whose approbation is no praise ; that good sense and virtue are the only qualifications which ensure or deserve lasting esteem ; and that a countenance far from beautiful, lighted up with intelligence and the virtuous feelings of the heart, will kindle emotions which mere regularity of features could never have excited : this is not the language of austerity and moroseness, but of truth, of prudence, and of Christian duty.

Pre-eminence in rank is likewise a topic which calls for especial admonitions even in the season of youth. Let the pupil, who finds herself in this respect elevated above her companions, be led clearly to apprehend, and practically to remember, that the distinctions of rank in society are instituted not for the advantage or gratification of any individual but for the benefit of the whole. Let her be taught that superiority, considered only with a reference to the individual who is in possession of it, is accompanied with proportionate duties and temptations; that to possess it implies no merit, to be without it no unworthiness; and that the only important distinctions are those which involve scriptural excellence of character and forbode permanent effects, the distinctions of a religious and an irreligious life.

Among children assembled in large bodies at seminaries of education, many are found who regulate their deportment to their school fellows, partly according to the degrees of wealth, but especially of gentility, which they conceive to belong to their respective families. When the parent or relation of any of the scholars drives up to the door, they crowd into the windows with other emotions besides that of simple curiosity; and, as the equipage is more or less shewy than that in which their own friends are wont to make their appearance, envy, or exult. They pry, by ingenious interrogatories, into the internal proceedings of each other's home; and triumph or repine according to the answers which they receive concerning the number of servants kept in the house, the magnificence of their liveries, the number of courses habitually served up at table, the number of assemblies and balls given at the town residence in winter, the extent of the gardens and of the park at the family mansion in the country, the intercourse maintained with nobility and people of fashion, and the connection subsisting with the sordid occupations and degrading profits of trade. When daughters are educated at home, the



same passions reveal themselves: but being encountered by the superior attention which may there be paid to a girl's dispositions, and wanting the encouragement which they would have derived in the school from example and from the exercise afforded to them by a continual supply of fresh materials upon which to work, they are more easily subdued. Both in public and in private education, let them meet with that vigilant and determined opposition, without which they will enslave the heart, and render the character a detestable compound of haughtiness, malevolence, and insensibility.

In treating of Education, I have not yet adverted to the care of health. In the case of children who do not labour under any particular weakness of frame, the concern which education has with health, consists not so much in positive endeavours to promote, as in cautiously forbearing to injure it; not so much in devising means to assist Nature in establishing a strong constitution, as in securing full scope for the benefit of her spontaneous exertions. Debility and disease require peculiar attentions. And universally, the plan of instruction ought to be so arranged as not to clash with the acquisition or the preservation of a blessing which, whether comfort or utility be considered, claims a place among the foremost attainable on earth. So intimate is the connection, so general the sympathy, between the body and the mind, that the vigour of the former seems not only to remove obstacles to the operations of the latter, but even to communicate to its powers an accession of strength. Wholesome food, early hours, pure air, and bodily exercise, are instruments not of health only, but of knowledge. Of these four indispensable requisites in every place and mode of education, the two first are seldom overlooked; in schools the two which remain frequently do not awaken the solicitude which they deserve. Is pure air to be found in the heated atmosphere of low and crowded rooms? Is it exercise to

pace once in a day in procession down a street or round a square ; or in regular arrangement to follow a teacher along the middle walk of a garden, forbidden to deviate to the right hand or to the left ? Pale cheeks, a languid aspect, and a feeble frame, answer the question ; and prognosticate the long train of nervous maladies, which lie in wait for future years. It is not necessary that girls should contend in the hardy amusements, which befit the youth of the other sex. But if you wish that they should possess, when women, a healthful constitution, steady spirits, and a strong and alert mind ; let active exercise in the open air be one of their daily recreations, one of their daily duties.

For the purpose of encouraging a propensity to salubrious exercise in the open air, it seems desirable that girls should be allowed, when educated at home, and if it be possible, when placed in schools, to possess little gardens of their own, and to amuse themselves in them with the lighter offices of cultivation. The healthiness of the employment would amply compensate for a few dagged frocks and dirtied gloves. Besides, an early relish for domestic amusements lays the foundation of a domestic character. The remembrance of delights experienced in childhood disposes the mind in riper years to pursuits akin to those, from which the recollected pleasures were derived.

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## CHAPTER V.

### ON THE MODE OF INTRODUCING YOUNG WOMEN INTO GENERAL SOCIETY.

WHEN the business of Education, whether conducted at home or at a public seminary, draws towards a conclusion, the next object that occupies the attention of the parent is

the momentous process which she terms the introduction of her daughter into the world. Emancipated from the shackles of instruction, the young woman is now to be brought forward to act her part on the public stage of life. And as though liberty were a gift unattended with temptations to inexperienced youth : as though vivacity, openness of heart, the consciousness of personal accomplishments and of personal beauty, would serve rather to counteract than to aggravate these temptations ; the change of situation is not unfrequently heightened by every possible aid of contrast. Pains are taken, as it were, to contrive, that when the dazzled stranger shall step from the nursery and the lecture-room, she shall plunge at once into a flood of vanity and dissipation. Mewed up from every prying gaze, taught to believe that her first appearance is the subject of universal expectation, tutored to beware above all things of tarnishing the lustre of her attractions by *mauvaise honte*, stimulated with desire to outshine her equals in age and rank, she burns with impatience for the hour of displaying her perfections : till at length, intoxicated beforehand with anticipated flatteries, she is launched, in the pride of ornament, on some occasion of festivity ; and from that time forward thinks by day and dreams by night of amusements, and of dress, and of compliments, and of admirers.

I believe this picture to convey no exaggerated representation of the state of things, which is often witnessed in the higher ranks of society. I fear, too, that it is a picture to which the practice of the middle ranks, though at present not fully corresponding, bears a continually increasing resemblance. The extreme, however, which has been described, has, like every other extreme, its opposite. There are mothers who profess to initiate their daughters, almost from the cradle, into the knowledge, as they are wont to express themselves, of life : and pollute the years of childhood with an instilled attachment to the card-table ; with

habits of flippancy and pertness, denominated wit ; with an "casiness" of manners, which ought to be named effrontery ; and with a knowledge of tales of scandal unfit to be mentioned by any one but in a court of justice. Both these extremes are most dangerous to every thing that is valuable in the female character ; to every thing on which happiness in the present world and in a future world depends. But of the two the latter is the more pernicious. In that system war is carried on almost from infancy, and carried on in the most detestable manner, against female delicacy and principle. In the former, that delicacy and that principle are exposed under the greatest disadvantages to the sudden influence of highly fascinating allurements. It may be hoped, however, that coming to the encounter as yet little impaired by extraneous circumstances, they may have some chance of escaping without severe injury. At any rate, be this chance ever so small ; is it not greater than the probability, that when assailed from their earliest dawn by slow poison incessantly administered, they should ultimately survive ?

To accustom the mind by degrees to the trials which it must learn to withstand, yet to shelter it from insidious temptations, while it is unable to discern and to shun the snare, is the first rule which wisdom suggests with regard to all trials and temptations whatever. To this rule too much attention cannot be paid in the mode of introducing a young woman into the common habits of social intercourse. Let her not be distracted in the years by nature especially designed for the cultivation of the understanding and the acquisition of knowledge, by the turbulence and glare of polite amusements. Let her not be suffered to taste the draught which the world offers to her, until she has learned that, if there be sweetness on the surface, there is venom deeper in the cup : until she has acquired a right judgment and a well-directed taste as to the pursuits and pleasures of life, or, according to the language of the Apostle, has become

disposed "to approve the things which are excellent;" and is fortified with those principles of Christian temperance and rectitude, which may guard her against unsafe indulgence. Let vanity and other unwarrantable springs of action, prompt, at all times, to exert their influence on the female character, and at no time likely to exert an influence more dangerous than when a young woman first steps into public life, be curtailed, as far as may be safely practicable, of the powerful assistance of novelty. Altogether to preclude that assistance is impossible. But it may be disarmed of much of its force by gradual familiarity. Let that gradual familiarity take place under the superintendence of parents and near relations, and of friends of approved sobriety and discretion. Let not the young woman be consigned to some fashionable instructress, who, professing at once to add the last polish to education, and to introduce the pupil into the best company, will probably dismiss her thirsting for admiration; inflamed with ambition; devoted to dress and amusements; initiated in the science and the habits of gaming; and prepared to deem every thing right and indispensable, which is or shall be recommended by modish example. Let her not be abandoned in her outset in life to the giddiness and mistaken kindness of fashionable acquaintance in the metropolis: nor forwarded under their convoy to public places, there to be whirled, far from maternal care and admonition, in the circles of levity and folly, into which, even had maternal care and admonition, been at hand to protect her, she ought not to have been permitted to step. At this very important season, while the mother selects with cautious discrimination, and limits within narrow bounds both as to time and expence, the scenes of public resort and entertainment, to which her youthful charge is suffered to have access; let her cultivate in the mind of the latter with augmented solicitude those principles, dispositions, and habits, which may lead her not



only cheerfully to acquiesce in the course adopted, but even spontaneously and decidedly to prefer it to a system of less guarded indulgence. Let a double share of attention be exerted to preserve and strengthen in her breast a sense of the sinfulness of human nature ; of the necessity of constantly looking up to divine support ; of the transitory and inconsiderable worth of temporal things compared with eternity : of the superiority of the peaceful and heartfelt joys, which flow from the discharge of duty and the animating hopes of the favour of God through Christ, over every other gratification. All these principles are menaced, when fresh inlets of ensnaring pleasures are opened. Let parental vigilance and love gently point out to the daughter, on every convenient occasion, what is proper or improper in the conduct of the persons of her own age, with whom she is in any degree conversant ; and also the grounds of the approbation or disapprobation expressed. Let parental counsel and authority be prudently exercised in regulating the choice of her associates. And at the same time that she is habituated to regard distinctions of wealth and rank, as circumstances wholly unconnected with personal worth : let her companions be in general neither much above her own level, nor much below it ; lest she should be led to ape the opinions, the expensiveness, and the fashionable follies of persons in a station higher than their own : or, in her intercourse with those of humbler condition, to assume airs of contemptuous and domineering superiority. Solitude on the part of parents, to consult the welfare of their child in these points, will probably be attended with a farther consequence of no small benefit to themselves ; when it persuades them to an increased degree of circumspection as to the visitors whom they encourage at home, and the society which they frequent abroad.

## CHAPTER VI.

## ON FEMALE CONVERSATION AND EPISTOLARY CORRESPONDENCE.

CONVERSATION is an index to the mind. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh (a)." The observation is true, not only when referring to those who use the language of openness and sincerity, but also when applied to the reserved man and the dissembler. Closeness indicates distrust; and often, by sharpening curiosity, causes the discovery of the very thing which is meant to be concealed. Art sooner or later drops the mask, or gives ample proof that she wears one. If it be admitted, conformably to general opinion, that female fluency in discourse is greater and more persevering than that of the other sex: it behoves women the more steadily to remember, that the fountain will be estimated according to the stream. If the rill run babbling along, shallow and frothy; the source will be deemed incapable of supplying a profound and tranquil current. If the former be muddy, bitter and corrosive; its offensiveness will be ascribed to the inherent qualities of the latter.

Among the faults which it is usual to hear laid to the charge of young women, when female discourse is canvassed, vanity, affectation, and frivolousness, seem to furnish the most prevailing theme of censure. That in a great number of instances the censure is warranted, cannot be denied. And every young woman ought to beware, lest there should be ground for applying it, with justice, to herself. For, if it should be with justice applied to her, let her be assured, that whatever may be the circumstances of palliation, by which

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(a) Matt. c. xii. v. 34.



a part of the blame may be transferred elsewhere ; there will yet be, in the most favourable 'case, a large residuum, for which she ought to be, and must be personally responsible. But it is no more than common candour to avow, that in addition to those defects which frequently subsist in the plan of female education, there is another cause to which a portion of this vanity, and of its concomitant habits and errors, must be ascribed ; namely, the injudicious and reprehensible behaviour of the other sex.

The style and kind of conversation in which men very generally indulge themselves towards unmarried women, not unfrequently towards married women, and towards no women so much as towards those who have been recently introduced into public, are such as would lead an indifferent auditor to conclude, either that their own intellectual powers are very slender ; or, that they regard the persons, to whom they are directing their discourse, as nearly devoid of understanding. For, antecedently to experience, could it appear probable that a man of sense, when conversing with a woman whom he deemed to possess a cultivated mind, would study, as it should seem, to shun every subject of discourse which might afford scope for the exercise of reason ; that his whole aim would apparently be, to excite noisy gaiety founded on nothing ; to call forth a contest of puny witticism and flippant repartee ; to discuss the merits of caps and colours, and essences and fans ; and to intoxicate the head, and beguile the heart, by every mode and every extravagance of compliment ? Yet such is the sort of conversation daily to be heard ; and not in public places only, but in private families ; and not only from the giddiness of empty young men, but from men of maturer years, and of a more sober cast ; men, who, themselves, have daughters about to be introduced into the world, and are themselves known, in their serious moments, to lament, and to lament with sincerity, the temptations and dangers

by which those daughters, when introduced, are to be assailed. The effects of such treatment and intercourse on young women are deeply and permanently mischievous. She who is already vain, frivolous, and affected, instead of deriving from the behaviour which she experiences from the other sex motives and encouragements to improvement, is confirmed in her faults more and more; and learns to continue from principle the habit which may have originated in thoughtlessness. And she who at present appears to be free from these faults, is in constant hazard either of being ensnared by the familiarity of example, and by the comparative disregard shewn to those excellencies with which she is endowed; or of contracting a disposition equally remote from feminine diffidence and Christian humility, namely, a propensity to admire her own acquisitions; to rest with proud confidence in her own judgement of persons and things; and to reprehend with censoriousness, or expose with sarcastic ridicule, the manners and the characters of her acquaintance. Young women will act wisely in remembering that men who are addicted to this style of conversation, and profuse in the language of complimentary encomium, are found in general to be indiscriminate flatterers, and to applaud without inward approbation; and that, if single men, they are often among the least likely to have their affections seriously engaged, and the least worthy to possess the affections of another.

But while, on the one hand, we allow to young women the full benefit of every apology that can be derived from the improper behaviour and example of the other sex in the points under consideration; truth requires us, on the other hand, to observe that this very behaviour on the part of men, which has been justly reprehended, is frequently called forth and encouraged by the favourable reception which it is seen to attain. Beauty delights to hear its own praise. Where beauty does not captivate in the countenance,

grace and elegance may attract in the person : and grace and elegance do not yield to beauty in the desire of admiration. Where neither beauty, nor grace, nor elegance, has been liberal of gifts, vanity is at hand to magnify every the most slender token of their bounty : and listens with open ears to the applauses which she imagines herself to deserve ; and with still greater eagerness to those, her title to which she had previously doubted. If personal attractions have been so sparingly bestowed, as neither to leave room for the expectation of sincere encomium, nor even for the delusive dreams of hope, in which the fancy is prone to indulge ; the love of compliment has yet other sources of gratification. Showy accomplishments become the ground on which the tribute of panegyric is claimed : and the tribute, once evidently claimed, will be regularly paid by conviction or by politeness. Hence it is that among a large proportion of young women and especially among those who are not remarkable for the strength of their understandings, and who have not been accustomed to estimate the worth of objects according to the standard of reason and religion, conversation loaded with flatteries, as silly as they are gross, too often finds welcome hearers. Hence also, it is confined in circles of this description to scenes, topics, and incidents which embrace little more than the amusements of the preceding or of the ensuing afternoon ; the looks and the dress of the present company or of their acquaintance ; petty anecdotes of the neighbourhood, and local scandal. Is it wonderful then that the wish prevalent in most men, and especially in young men, to render themselves acceptable in social intercourse to the female sex, should betray them into a mode of behaviour which they perceive to be so generally welcome ? Is it wonderful that he, who discovers trifling to be the way to please, should become a trifler ; that he who by the casual introduction of a subject, which seemed to call upon the reason to exert

itself, has brought an ominous yawn over the countenance of his fair auditor, should guard against a repetition of the offence? But it is not only to women of moderate capacity that hours of trifling and flippant conversation are found acceptable. To those of superior talents they are not unfrequently known to give a degree of entertainment, greater than on slight consideration we might have expected. The matter, however, may easily be explained. Some women who are endowed with strong mental powers, are little inclined to the trouble of exerting them. They love to indulge a supine vacuity of thought : listen to nonsense without dissatisfaction, because to listen to it requires no effort ; neither search nor prompt others to search deeper than the surface of the passing topic of discourse ; and were it not for an occasional remark that indicates discernment, or a look of intelligence which gleams through the listlessness of sloth, would scarcely be suspected of judgement and penetration. While these persons rarely seem in the common intercourse of life to turn their abilities to the advantage either of themselves or of their friends ; others gifted with equal talents, are tempted to misapply them by the consciousness of possessing them. Vain of their powers and of their dexterity in the use of them, they cannot resist the impulse which they feel to lead a pert and coxcomical young man, whenever he falls in their way, to expose himself. The prattle which they despise, they encourage ; because it amuses them by rendering the speaker ridiculous. They lead him on, unsuspecting of their design, and secretly pluming himself on the notice which he attracts, and on his own happy talents of rendering himself agreeable, and delighted the most when he is most the object of derision, from one step of folly to another. By degrees they contract an habitual relish for the style of conversation, which enables them at once to display their own wit, and to gratify their passion for mirth and their taste for the ludicrous. They

become inwardly impatient when it flags ; and more impatient when it meets with interruption. And if a man of grave aspect and more wakeful reflection presumes to step within the circle, they assail the unwelcome intruder with a volley of brilliant raillery and sparkling repartee, which bears down knowledge and learning before it ; and convulse the delighted auditors with peals of laughter, while he labours in his heavy accoutrements after his light armed antagonist, and receives at every turn a shower of arrows, which he can neither parry nor withstand.

From the remarks which have been made on the frivolousness of language and sentiment which often appears agreeable to women ; and even to women who are qualified both to communicate and to enjoy the highest pleasures of conversation which can flow from cultivated minds ; let it not be inferred, that the mixed discourse either of female society, or of young persons of the two sexes, is to resemble the discussions of a board of philosophers ; and that ease and gaiety, and laughter and wit, are to be proscribed as inveterate enemies of sobriety and good sense. Let ease exempt from affectation, gaiety prompted by sportive good humour, laughter the effusion of ingenuous delight, and wit unstained with any tincture of malevolence, enliven the hours of social converse. But let it not be thought that their enlivening influence is unreasonably curtailed, if good sense be empowered at all times to superintend their proceedings ; and if sobriety be authorised sometimes to interpose topics, which may exercise and improve the faculties of the understanding.

The true sources of useful and pleasing conversation, whether in men or in women, (and let it be remembered that no conversation can be truly pleasing that is not accompanied by simplicity of manner), are virtuous dispositions, right judgement, and polished taste. I mention them in the order in which they appear to be requisite. Persons



of either sex, who ambitiously endeavour to supply by artificial props, or to compensate by artificial ornaments, the want of any of these solid foundations of improving and attractive discourse, may for a time amuse the indolent, or may catch the applause of ignorance and folly. But they will not long render themselves acceptable even in mixed company, to considerate observers. And they will altogether fail in the far more important office of diffusing improvement, of communicating pleasure, and of gaining friendship and affection, in the society of private life.

At the close of these remarks on Female Conversation, it may be allowable to subjoin a few words on a kindred subject, Epistolary Correspondence. Letters which pass between men commonly relate in a greater or a less degree, to actual business. Even young men, on whom the cares of life are not yet devolved in their full weight, will frequently be led to enlarge to their absent friends on topics not only of an interesting nature, but also of a serious cast: on the studies which they are respectively pursuing; on the advantages and disadvantages of the profession to which the one or the other is destined; on the circumstances which appear likely to forward or to impede the success of each in the world. The seriousness of the subject, therefore, has a tendency, though a tendency which, I admit, is not always successful, to guard the writer from an affected and artificial style. Young women, whose minds are comparatively unoccupied by such concerns, are sometimes found to want in their correspondence a counterpoise, if not to the desire of shining, yet to the quickness of imagination, and occasionally, to the quickness of feeling, natural to their sex. Hence they are exposed to peculiar danger, a danger aggravated sometimes by familiarity with novels and theatrical productions, sometimes by the nature of the fashionable topics which will proceed from engrossing conversation to employ the pen, of learning to clothe their thoughts in studied phrases; and



even of losing simplicity both of thought and expression in florid, refined, and sentimental parade. Frequently, too, the desire of shining intermingles itself, and involves them in additional temptations. They are ambitious to be distinguished for writing, as the phrase is, *good* letters. Not that a lady ought not to write a good letter. But a lady, who makes it her study to write a good letter, commonly produces a composition to which a very different epithet ought to be applied. Those letters only are good, which contain the natural effusions of the heart, expressed in unaffected language. Tinsel and glitter, and laboured phrases, dismiss the friend and introduce the authoress. From the use of strained and hyperbolical language, it is but a step to advance to that which is insincere. But though that step be not taken, all that is pleasing in letter-writing is already lost. And a far heavier loss is to be dreaded, the loss of simplicity of manners and character in other points. For when a woman is habitually betrayed into an artificial mode of proceeding by vanity, by the desire of pleasing, by erroneous judgement, or by any other cause ; can it be improbable that the same cause should extend its influence to other parts of her conduct, and be productive of similar effects ? In justice to the female sex, however, it ought to be added, that when amiable women, and especially amiable women of improved understandings, write with simplicity ; and employ their pens in a more rational way than retailing the shapes of head-dresses and gowns, and thus, however, without intention, encouraging each other in vanity ; their letters are in many respects particularly pleasing. Being unencumbered with grave dispositions, they possess a peculiar ease ; disclose in the most engaging manner the best affections of the human heart ; and shew with singular clearness the delicate features and shades, which distinguish the mind of the writer.

## CHAPTER VII.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS ON PROPENSITY TO IMITATION.  
—ON DRESS.

THE remarks on the mode of introducing young persons of the female sex into public, which were stated in a former chapter, were calculated primarily for the consideration of mothers, and of persons who have to supply the place of mothers. The present and the two succeeding chapters are addressed to the daughter no less than to her elder relations.

At the age when young women are introduced into general society, the character, even of those who have been the best instructed, is in a considerable degree unfixed. The full force of temptation, as yet known only by report, is now to be learned from hazardous experience. Right principles, approved in theory, are to be reduced from speculation into practice. Modes of conduct, wisely chosen, and well begun, are to be confirmed by the influence of habit. New scenes are to be witnessed; new opinions to be heard; new examples to be observed; new dangers to be encountered. The result of very few years at this season of life in almost every case powerfully affects, and in many cases unequivocally decides, the tenor of its future course. Unfortunate are those individuals who, at this critical period, being destitute of the counsel of judicious friends, or too giddy to give it a patient hearing, or too opinionated to receive it with kindness, advance unaided to the trial: and are left blindly to imbibe the maxims, and imitate the proceedings, of the thoughtless multitude around them.

As erroneous opinions and reprehensible proceedings with respect to Dress and Amusements are frequently occasioned, or in a very high degree aggravated, by the habit of imitation: some prefatory remarks on that subject may not be devoid of utility.

A propensity to imitation is natural to the human mind, and is attended with various effects highly favourable to human happiness. To childhood it is a perpetual source of knowledge gained without labour and without reluctance. In riper years it continues to instruct. It produces such a degree of conformity between the manners and conduct of different individuals, as maintains the harmony of society, notwithstanding the clashing pursuits and pretensions which agitate the world. It contributes, in subordination to higher principles, to conciliate those, who have experienced a sudden elevation or depression of fortune, to the habits of their new condition, and to open their eyes to its comforts. This propensity shews itself with especial strength in the female sex. Providence designing from the beginning that, in many respects, the manner of life to be adopted by women should ultimately depend, not so much on their own deliberate choice, as on the determination, or at least on the interest and convenience, of the parent, of the husband, or of some other near connection; has implanted in them a remarkable tendency to conform to the wishes and example of those for whom they feel a warmth of regard, and even of all those with whom they are in familiar habits of intercourse. In youth, when the feelings of the heart are the most lively, and established modes of proceeding are not yet formed, this principle is far more powerful than in the more advanced periods of life. As the mind in obeying the impulse of this principle, no less than in following any other of its native or acquired tendencies, is capable of being ensnared into errors and excesses; the season of youth, the season when the principle itself is in its greatest

strength, and when it has yet derived few lessons from reflection and experience, is the time when error and excess are most to be apprehended. In youth, too, when the love of admiration and the dread of shame are unimpaired; there are few subjects and occasions so likely to produce error and excess, as those in which closeness of imitation is deemed the road to respect and applause; and even small degrees of singularity are supposed to entail considerable disgrace. Let these circumstances be duly recollected, and we shall not greatly wonder that women in general, and especially very young women, feel an extreme repugnance to fall short of their neighbours in compliance with every fashion of the day not palpably criminal. And we shall be less astonished than concerned, that so many are led with open eyes by the attraction of prevailing custom indiscriminately to copy the pattern set before them by their equals and their superiors; and after following the crowd through unceasing fluctuations of vanity, of folly, of pride, and of extravagance, to attend it, to say the least, to the confines even of more flagrant vice.

But circumstances, which may not excite wonder, are not the less on that account to be lamented. Against error and misconduct we are not to be the less diligently guarded, because from the weakness of human nature, and the force of temptation, they may be likely to occur. The known probability of an undesirable event is an additional reason for vigilance and circumspection. If life be a state of trial, the more easily a young woman may be betrayed into a fault, the more carefully ought she to be fortified against it by friendly admonition. I dwell the longer on these very obvious truths, because persons of worth and understanding appear sometimes to give currency to a mistaken and pernicious opinion, that follies and failings *natural*, as the phrase is, to certain periods of life, or to persons in certain situations, are of no great moment. And though, if constrained by the incommodious perseverance of some close reasoner to express their

sentiments respecting any such point of conduct, they mention it with a degree of blame ; yet they pass over the matter lightly, and seem not to think it necessary to give themselves or others much trouble about it.

In things which in themselves, and also in their attendant circumstances, are indifferent, custom is generally the proper guide: and obstinately to resist its authority, with respect to objects in reality of that description, is commonly the mark either of weakness or of arrogance. The variations of dress, as in countries highly polished frequent variations will exist, fall within its jurisdiction. And as long as the prevailing modes remain actually indifferent ; that is to say, as long as in their form they are not tinctured with indelicaey, nor in their costliness are inconsistent with the station or the fortune of the wearer, or with the spirit of Christian moderation ; such a degree of conformity to them, as is sufficient to preclude the appearance of particularity, is reasonable and becoming. It is modestly to acquiesce in the decision of others, on a subject upon which they have at least as good a title as ourselves to decide, and upon which they have not decided amiss. When other unobjectionable modes are generally established, the same reasoning indicates the propriety of acceding to them.

But let not this reasoning be misapplied. In the first place, it neither suggests nor justifies the practice of adopting fashions which intrench either on the principles of decency, or on the rules of reasonable frugality and Christian simplicity. Fashions of the former kind are not unfrequently introduced by the shameless, of the latter by the profuse ; and both are copied by the vain and the inconsiderate. But deliberately to copy either, is to shew that delicacy, the chief grace of the female character : or that œconomy, the support not merely of honesty alone, but of generosity ; or that a conformity to the temper which characterises the followers of Christ, is deemed an object only of secondary



importance. To copy either inadvertently, denotes a want of habitual liveliness of attention to the native dictates of sensibility, or to the suggestions of equity and kindness, or to the revealed will of God. Among the modes of attire more or less inconsistent with feminine modesty, those which studiously ape the garb of the other sex are to be classed (*a*). Their unpleasing effect is heightened by additional circumstances, which very commonly attend them, and are designed perhaps to strengthen the resemblance; a masculine air and deportment, and masculine habits of address and familiarity. To those whom higher motives would not deter from exhibiting, or following so preposterous an example, it may not be ineffectual to whisper, that she who conceives that to imitate the habitments of persons of the other sex, is a probable method of captivating the beholders, is not a little unfortunate in her conjecture. Let her ask herself, in what manner she would be impressed by the appearance of a young man studiously approaching in his dress to the model

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(*a*) From the account which Dr. Henry gives of English manners and customs at different periods, both sexes among our ancestors appear to have been as much attached to costliness, variety, and, I may add, absurdity in dress, as their contemporaries abroad, and each sex commonly as much as the other. From the two following passages, however, in his History, it may be inferred that at one period, namely, in the reign of Henry the Eighth, the men exceeded the women in extravagance and fickleness. "The dress of the period was costly, and in its fashions subject to frequent fluctuations: so costly, that the wardrobes of the nobility in fifty years had increased to twenty times their former value; so changeable, that the capricious inconstancy of the national dress was quaintly represented by the figure of an Englishman in a musing posture, with sheers in his hand and cloth on his arm, perplexed amidst a multiplicity of fashions, and uncertain how to devise his garments." Vol. vi. page 661. "The attire of females was becoming and decent, similar in its fashion to their present dress, but less subject to change and caprice." *Ib.* p. 663.



of her own ; and she will not be at a loss to estimate the repulsive influence of her accoutrements on those whom she copies. Beauty, it is true, may remain attractive in the midst of absurd and uncouth decorations. It is attractive, however, not in consequence of them, but in spite of them ; and it attracts with force singularly diminished by the medium through which it has chosen to operate. And those men, who expect in women qualities more estimable than personal charms, feel themselves impelled to draw conclusions not very favourable to the understanding or to the dispositions of one, who proves herself so little attached to the proprieties natural to her sex ; and if they are betrayed by inadvertence into the language of compliment, can scarcely restrain emotions of disgust from rising in their hearts.

Fashions in dress, which in the two leading particulars already specified are irreprehensible, are yet sometimes of such a nature as to be extremely inconvenient to the wearer. Modes of this description may seldom be likely to be very long prevalent. But, while they continue, every practicable discouragement should be pointed against them ; and similar care should be employed to discountenance all such methods of decorating the person as involve in their operations the surrender of any considerable portion of time.

In the next place, it is to be observed, that the principles, which recommend such a degree of compliance with established fashions of an unobjectionable nature as is sufficient to prevent the appearance of particularity, cannot be alleged in defence of those persons, who are solicitous to pursue existing modes through their minute ramifications, or who seek to distinguish themselves as the introducers or early followers of new modes. Fickleness, or vanity, or ambition, is the motive which encourages such desires : desires which afford presumptive evidence of feebleness of intellect, though found occasionally to actuate and degrade superior minds. It happens, in the embellishment of the person, as in most other

instances, that wayward caprice, and a passion for admiration, deviate into those paths of folly which lead from the objects of pursuit.

—————We have run  
Through every change that fancy, at the loom  
Exhausted, has had genius to supply;  
And studious of mutation still, discard  
A real elegance, a little used,  
For monstrous novelty, and strange disguise (*b*).

So preposterous and fantastic are the disguises of the human form which modern fashion has exhibited, that her votaries, when brought together in her public haunts, have sometimes been found scarcely able to refrain from gazing with an eye of ridicule and contempt on each other. And while individually priding themselves on their elegance and taste, they have very commonly appeared in the eyes of an indifferent spectator to be running a race for the acquisition of deformity.

It is a frequent and a just remark, that objects in their own nature innocent and entitled to notice, may become the sources of disadvantage and of guilt, when, by being raised from the rank of trifles to ideal importance, they occupy a share of attention which they do not deserve; and when they are pursued with an immoderate ardour, which at once indisposes the mind to occupations of higher concern, and clouds it with malignant emotions. There are few subjects, by a reference to which it is more easy to illustrate the observation; there are none to which it is more evidently necessary to apply it, than fashions in attire, in equipage, in furniture, in the embellishments of the table, and in other similar circumstances. Thus, to speak of the topic immediately under consideration, if, in addition to that reasonable degree of regard to propriety of attire which ensures the

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(*b*) Cowper's Task, Book 2d.

strictness neatness, and a modest conformity in unobjectionable points to the authority of custom, a young woman permits her thoughts to be frequently engaged by the subject of exterior ornaments ; occupations of moment will be proportionally neglected. From the complacency natural to all human beings, when employed in contemplating objects by means of which the flattering hope of shining is presented to them ; she will be in the most imminent danger of contracting a distaste to serious reflection, and of being at length absorbed in the delusions of vanity and self-love. It is undoubtedly a matter of indifference, whether a lady's ribbands be green or blue ; whether her head be decorated with flowers or with feathers ; whether her gown be composed of muslin or of silk. But it is no matter of indifference, whether the time which she devotes to the determination of one of these points, is to be reckoned by hours or by minutes. Neither is it indifferent whether, on discovering the elevation of her bonnet to be an inch higher or lower, and its tint a shade lighter or darker, than the model which prevails among her acquaintance, she is overwhelmed with consternation and disappointment, or bears the calamity with the apathy of a stoic.

I have not scrupled in the preceding pages explicitly to inculcate the duty of refraining from compliance with fashions in dress, which would be accompanied with a degree of expence inconsistent with the present circumstances of the individual. Let not the admonition be conceived as intended to countenance a niggardly disposition. To prevent the danger of contracting such a disposition, has been one of the principal reasons for offering the advice. Young women who accustom themselves to be lavish in matters of personal decoration, easily proceed to think, that so long as they restrain their expensiveness within the limits of the resources supplied by their parents and friends, they are not chargeable with blame on the subject. If they pay their bills punctually,

who is entitled to find fault? Those persons will discern just cause of reprehension, who do not consider the honest payment of bills at the customary times as comprising the whole of human duty with regard to the expenditure of money. The demands of justice may be silenced: but has benevolence no claims to be satisfied? The fact is, that an unguarded fondness for ornament has been known, in a multitude of examples, to overpower the native tenderness of the female mind; and to prevent the growth and establishment of dispositions pronounced in the Gospel to be indispensably requisite to the Christian character. If the purse be generally kept low by the demands of milliners, of mantua-makers, of jewellers and dealers in trinkets, and of others who bear their part in adorning the person; little can be allotted to the applications of charity. But charity requires, in common with other virtues, the fostering influence of habit. If the custom of devoting an adequate portion of the income to the relief of distress be long intermitted, the desire of giving relief will gradually be impaired. The heart forgets, by disuse, the emotions in which it once delighted. The ear turns from solicitations now become unwelcome. In proportion as the wants and the griefs of others are disregarded, the spirit of selfishness strikes deeper and stronger roots in the breast. Let the generous exertions of kindness be tempered with discretion: but let a disposition to those exertions be encouraged on principles of duty; and confirmed, in proportion to the ability of the individual, by frequency of practice. Before the world has repressed, by its interested lessons, the warmth of youthful benevolence, let experience establish a conviction, that the greatest of all pleasures is to do good. She who has accustomed herself to this delight, will not easily be induced to forego it. She will feel, that whatever she is able, without penuriousness or improper singularity, to withdraw from the expence of personal ornament, is not only reserved for much higher purposes,

but for purposes productive of exquisite and permanent gratification.

Another, and a very important benefit which results from fixed habits of moderation as to dress, and all points of a similar nature, will be clearly discerned by adverting to the irreparable evils into which young women are sometimes plunged by the contrary practice. The lavish indulgence in which they have learned to seek for happiness, becoming, in their estimation, essential to their comfort, is able to bias their conduct in every important step. Hence in forming matrimonial connections, it exercises perhaps a secret, but a very powerful influence. The prospect of wealth and magnificence, of the continuance and of the increase of pleasures supposed to flow from the pomp of dress and equipage, from sumptuous mansions, shewy furniture, and numerous attendants, dazzles the judgement ; imposes on the affections ; conceals many defects in moral character, and compensates for others. It frequently proves the decisive circumstance which leads the deluded victim to the altar, there to consign herself to splendid misery for life.

There are yet other consequences which attend an immoderate passion for the embellishments of dress. When the mind is fixed upon objects which derive their chief value from the food which they administer to vanity and the love of admiration ; the aversion, which almost every individual of either sex is prone to feel towards a rival, is particularly called forth. And when objects attainable so easily as exterior ornaments occupy the heart, there will be rivals without number. Hence it is not very unusual to see neighbouring young women engaged in a constant state of petty warfare with each other. To vie in ostentatiousness, in costliness or in elegance of apparel ; to be distinguished by novel inventions in the science of decoration : to gain the earliest intelligence respecting changes of fashion in the metropolis ; to detect, in the attire of a luckless competitor, traces of



a mode which for six weeks has been obsolete in high life ; these frequently are the points of excellence to which the force of female genius is directed. In the mean time, while the mask of friendship is worn on the countenance, and the language of regard dwells on the tongue, indifference, disgust, and envy, are gradually taking possession of the breast ; until, at length, the unworthy contest, prolonged for years under confirmed habits of dissimulation, by which none of the parties are deceived, terminates in the violence of an open rupture.

The Scriptures have spoken too plainly and too strongly respecting solicitude about dress, to permit me to quit the subject without a special reference to their authority. Our Saviour, in one of his most solemn discourses, warns his followers against anxiety “ wherewithal they should be “ clothed,” in a manner particularly emphatical, by classing that anxiety with the despicable pursuits of those who are studious “ what they shall eat, and what they shall drink ;” and by pronouncing all such cares to be among the characteristical features, by which the heathen were distinguished and disgraced (*c*). It ought to be observed that these admonitions of Christ respect men no less than women. St. Paul in the following passage, speaks pointedly concerning female dress : “ I will, in like manner also, that women “ adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shame-facedness “ and sobriety ; not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, “ or costly array : but, which becometh women professing “ godliness, with good works (*d*).” In another passage, which remains to be produced from the New Testament, St. Peter also speaks expressly of the female sex : and primarily of married women, but in terms applicable with equal propriety to the single : “ Whose adorning, let it not be that

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(*c*) Mat. vi. 31. 32.      (*d*) 1 Tim. ii. 8. 10.



“outward adorning of plaiting the hair and of wearing of gold, and of putting on of apparel. But let it be the hidden man of the heart,” (the inward frame and disposition of the mind), “in that which is not corruptible; even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price (e).” It would be too much to assert, on the one hand, that it was the intention of either of the Apostles, in giving these directions, to proscribe the use of the particular kinds of personal ornament which he specifies. But on the other hand, it was unquestionably the design of both, to proscribe whatever may justly be styled solicitude respecting any kind of personal decoration: and to censure those, who instead of resting their claim to approbation solely on the tempers of the soul, in any degree should ambitiously seek to be noticed and praised for exterior embellishments, as deviating precisely in that degree from the simplicity and the purity of the Christian character. By parity of reasoning these observations may be extended from the subject of dress to solicitude respecting equipage, and all other circumstances in domestic œconomy, with which the idea of showy appearance may be connected. They may be extended also to a thirst for fashionable talents and dispositions, (for even as to talents and dispositions there is a fashion,) and for modish accomplishments, gestures, phrases, reading, and employments.

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(e) 1 Peter, iii. 3. 4.

## CHAPTER VIII.

ON AMUSEMENTS IN GENERAL. — MASQUERADES. — THE  
EFFICACY OF INDIVIDUAL EXAMPLE CONSIDERED.

AMUSEMENTS, private as well as public, form another province over which custom and fashion are generally allowed to preside. The claim may be, under due limitations, not unreasonable. But that propensity to imitation in the female sex, which has already been explained, concurs with the high spirits and inexperience of youth very often to lead women to venture, in this province, on ground that is manifestly inauspicious, and sometimes on ground which ought to be deemed absolutely forbidden. In former ages, when the barbarous combats of gladiators were exhibited in the Roman Circus; and exhibited in so many cities and with such frequency, as in some instances to cause from twenty to thirty thousand lives to be sacrificed in Europe by this abominable cruelty within the space of a month; the wives and daughters of the citizens of all ranks are represented as having been passionately addicted to these spectacles (*f*). To our own countrywomen, whose eyes have not been polluted nor their hearts hardened by brutish and sanguinary entertainments, this recital may scarcely appear credible. But the fact is confirmed by similar examples. I mean not to dwell on the concurrent accounts, given by different writers, of the extreme delight which the women among the North American Indians manifest, when vying with each other in embittering the tortures inflicted on the captive enemy: partly because a large share of the pleasure is

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(*f*) Lipsius, Sat. b. 1. c. 12.

derived from the triumphant spirit of revenge; and partly, because parallels drawn from the untamed ferocity of savage life cannot fairly be applied to illustrate the influence of custom on modern periods of refinement. But a fact, too nearly corresponding to that which has been alleged from the annals of Rome, was very recently to be witnessed, I believe that it is even yet to be witnessed, in one of the cultivated nations of the South of Europe. I allude to the Spanish Bull-feasts. Persons of credit, who have lately visited Spain, unite in describing the Spanish ladies as beyond measure fond of this barbarous species of entertainment (g); and as most vehement in their applause when the scene of danger is at the height. I state these facts as affording an impressive example of the force of custom; and a warning of the firmness with which the despotism of fashion may in many cases require to be withstood, even when it is aspiring to jurisdiction merely over amusements. If in the present age, in a Christian country, among a people

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(g) See "Townsend's Journey through Spain, in the years 1786 and 1787," second edition, vol. i. p. 342, &c. According to his statement, the Bull-feasts at Madrid are regularly held one day in every week, and often two days, throughout the summer. On each of these days six bulls are slaughtered in the morning, and twelve in the evening. Of the men who engage the furious animal, some maintain the combat on foot, some on horseback. The sanguinary nature and the danger of the employment may be estimated from two circumstances, mentioned with another view by the author whom I quote. First, that *seventeen horses* on an average are killed by the bulls each day; and that *sixty horses* have been known to perish in a day. Secondly, that among the official attendants on the Bull-feasts, is a priest appointed to administer the sacrament to persons mortally wounded in the conflict. He concludes his account in the following terms. "The fondness of the Spaniards for this diversion is scarcely to be conceived. Men, women, and children, rich and poor, all give the preference to it beyond all other public spectacles." His testimony might receive confirmation, were it necessary, from other authorities.

which lays claim to considerable refinement, fashion has power to benumb the sympathetic emotions of humanity which characterise the female heart ; to render exhibitions of cruelty and bloodshed, the miseries of tortured animals (*h*), and the dangers of their wretched assailants, not merely tolerable to female eyes, but a spectacle gratifying beyond every other in the way of amusement ; let it not be thought very improbable, that in our own country fashion may, on some occasions, prove herself able to attach women to amusements, which, though neither stained with blood, nor derived from the infliction of pain, may be such as for other reasons ought to be universally reprobated and exploded. And whenever such occasions may arise, let every woman remember, that modes of amusement intrinsically wrong, or in any respect unbecoming the female sex, are not transformed into innocent recreations by the countenance of numbers, nor by the sanction, if they should obtain the sanction, of nobility, or of a court.

Conscientious vigilance to avoid an improper choice of amusements, and an undue sacrifice of time to them, is a duty of great importance, not only because time spent amiss can never be recalled, but also because, by the nature of the engagements in which the hours of leisure and relaxation are employed, the manners, the dispositions, and the whole character, are materially affected. Let the volume of any

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(*h*) In the former part of the sixteenth century, Bear-baiting is affirmed to have been "a favourite diversion, exhibited as a suitable amusement for a Princess." Henry's History of England, vol. vi. p. 671. An amusement thus countenanced was probably acceptable to English ladies in general. It appears, at a later period, to have still maintained a place among the recreations of women of rank. Among the spectacles displayed for the diversion of Queen Elizabeth, when she was entertained at Kenilworth Castle by the Earl of Leicester, bear-baitings and boxing-matches are enumerated by the historian of the festivity.

judicious traveller through a foreign country be opened in the part where he delineates the pursuits, the general conduct, the prevailing moral or immoral sentiments of the people. He will there be found to bestow attention on their customary diversions, not only because the account of them adds entertainment to his narrative, and is necessary in order to complete the picture of national manners, but also because they form one of the sources to which national opinions, virtues, and vices, may be traced. It is true, that the amusements which prevail in any country will depend, in a considerable degree, on the tone of sentiment and opinion prevailing there; because a conformity to the existing state of general sentiment and opinion is necessary to render public amusements generally acceptable. But it is also true, that the latter exert a reciprocal influence on the former; and are among the most active of the causes by which it may be altered or upheld. If he who affirmed that, were he allowed to compose the ballads of a nation, he would at pleasure change its form of government, uttered a boast not altogether unfounded in the principles of human nature; with juster confidence might he have engaged to produce most important effects on the manners, opinions, and moral character of a nation, should he be invested with full power over all the public diversions. The influence of amusements on character is manifest in both sexes. A young woman, however, must be deemed more liable than an individual of the other sex, to have the dispositions of the heart essentially affected by favourite modes of entertainment. Her time is not absorbed, nor her turn of mind formed and steadied, by professional habits and occupations: and her superior quickness of feeling renders her the more alive to impressions conveyed through a pleasureable medium. Tacitus, in his description of the manners of the ancient inhabitants of Germany, dwells with merited praise on the singular modesty of the women; and assigns as a principal cause of

this virtuous excellence, that they were not corrupted by seducing spectacles and diversions (i). The remark is made with his usual acuteness of moral reflection. And we cannot doubt, that it was suggested by his experience of the melancholy depravation of conduct in the ladies of Rome, resulting from their attendance on the Amphitheatre and the Circus.

Since then, it is evident that the character and dispositions cannot fail to be in some measure changed by the amusements habitually pursued; and that alterations of supreme importance have taken place, and may therefore again take place, under their influence; it seems proper to add some distinct observations on the different classes of public diversions, which are at present frequented in this country by persons in the upper and the middle ranks of life.

The class of amusements which, in consequence of having assumed to itself a sort of pre-eminence in dignity and splendor over other scenes of entertainment, claims to be noticed in the first place, consists of those in which the parties engaged appear under the disguise of a borrowed character. It includes all those meetings which, however distinguished each from the other in the fashionable world by diversities of form and other circumstances, may here be comprehended under the general name of masquerades. Amusements of this sort have also a pre-eminence different from that which has already been ascribed to them; an inherent pre-eminence, which entitles them in a moral point of view to the earliest consideration. It is a pre-eminence in the power of doing mischief. Of all the authorised modes of public entertainment now countenanced by persons of credit of either sex, these are, in proportion to their frequency and extent,

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(i) "Quod nec spectaculorum illecebris, nec conviviorum irritationibus corruptæ."—*De Moribus Germ.*



beyond doubt the most pernicious. They are calculated to surpass the rest in encouraging evil, and to fall short of them all in every thing like a counterpoise of good. Their dangerous tendency arises from a circumstance essential to their nature ; from the state of concealment under which the individuals present keep themselves from the knowledge of each other. To affirm this general state of concealment to be essential to the nature, and inseparable from the amusement, of a masquerade, is not too strong language. Some few of the parties may be discovered to each other without diminution of entertainment to the principal number : and the conversation which may arise between persons, where detection has taken place on one side only, may occasionally create an accession of mirth. But let all the parties, or even the principal share, become mutually known, and there would remain nothing to surprise and to interest. Curiosity might be willing to employ a few minutes in gazing on the dresses, and in fixing in her memory the names of the individuals by whom they had severally been assumed. But the pageant would almost instantly become insipid ; and the sultans, the chimney-sweepers, the harlequins, the shepherdesses, and the nuns, would speedily regard each other with the indifference with which they would view the motley tinsel of a troop of morrice-dancers, or the kings and queens of gilded gingerbread at a fair. Now, if invention were to occupy itself in devising situations, situations I mean not incompatible with the forms of public amusement, which should be specifically adapted to encourage and forward the enterprises of vice, to undermine the firmness of innocence, or, if we rate the mischief at the lowest degree, to wear away the delicacy of a young woman, and supply its place by petulant assurance : what scheme could be more obvious or more auspicious than to take away the restraints of openness and shame ; to give scope for unbounded license of speech and action by covering the

speakers and actors with obscurity; and under these circumstances to bring together, in one promiscuous assemblage, the inexperienced and the artful, the virtuous and the profligate? But the profligate, it will, perhaps, be said in reply by the advocate for these diversions, shall be excluded from well-regulated masquerades. The doors shall not fly open at the approach of every one who has money to hire a dress and purchase a ticket. A proper introduction shall be required, and access granted only to *good company*. Are these precautions, then, observed in most masquerades? It is conceded that they are not. Let us ask a second question still more to the point: Is it possible that they can be observed, with effect, in any? Bar the doors with the utmost care; watch them with unceasing attention; prescribe check upon check, passport upon passport; exact every attainable testimonial, certificate, and recommendation; establish every barrier of form and etiquette; and vice will laugh at your solicitude, and overleap all your obstacles at pleasure. What is to qualify a person for admission to your well-regulated masquerade? Will you not deem birth and fortune, and liberal connexions, polished manners, and a character outwardly decent, to be satisfactory qualifications? Are these qualifications, which are all that are required to enroll a person among those whom the world classes under the denomination of good company; which are by no means to be found in all persons whom the world honours with that title; which are recognised as a passport into the private society of individuals and families of rank and respectability: are these to be pronounced at the door of a public room insufficient to make a person worthy of being allowed to purchase a ticket, and to share in the evening's amusement? Could this system of exclusion be maintained in practice? Could a system still stricter be maintained? If it be not practicable to uphold a system even much more strict, there is an end of all your hopes of excluding the

vicious. Birth, and wealth, and liberal connections, and polished manners, and a character outwardly decent, are every day found to prove disguises, which conceal profligate conduct and a corrupt heart. The society of persons, to whom this description is applicable, is at all times dangerous to the innocent and especially to the young. It is dangerous in domestic intercourse ; it is dangerous in the scene of public resort : but the danger is increased tenfold, when they are enabled to exercise their arts under a mask. No longer acting in the face of day, before the world, before witnesses whose countenance and good opinion they are aware that it would be unwise to forfeit ; they are left exempt from the curb of disgrace and fear, unknown and irresponsible, to indulge whatever shameful levity the scene and the hour may favour, to carry on whatever dark machination their interest and their passions may suggest. What considerate parent would expose his daughter to the risk of having her ears insulted by the mirth and jests of the unprincipled ? What considerate parent would teach her, even if no further mischief could possibly ensue, to seek for diversion in a theatrical assumption of fictitious language and sentiment, and in familiarity of conversation, and contests of snip-snap repartee with strangers ? What considerate daughter would wish a parent to lead her, or to admit of her being led, into such meetings ?

Parents, who on the whole disapprove of these diversions, from a conviction of their pernicious tendency, are sometimes known to be the very persons who introduce their daughter to an acquaintance with them. They profess to introduce her on principle ; affirming, that they design merely to let her be present at a masquerade, once or twice, in order that she may know what it is. Spontaneously to introduce their daughter into a situation of danger which there was no necessity that she should ever experience, is in truth a singular species of wisdom. Is this the way to

inspire her with a persuasion that the amusement in question is one, from which it becomes her to abstain ; Or is it rather the very method to kindle a fondness for these revels of midnight and concealment ; revels, which she never knew until initiated into them by a parent ; revels, which, but for that initiation, she might never have known : revels, into whose worst excesses she may hereafter plunge in consequence of that initiation, when the force of parental authority shall be decayed, and a change of circumstances shall leave her at liberty to gratify her desires ?

A plea which we shall perhaps hear advanced in behalf of these entertainments, by persons who, though far from inwardly approving them, cannot easily persuade themselves to decide in favour of conscience against fashion, and study to deceive themselves by specious pretences for doing wrong, is this : that masquerades do no very great harm, because they recur but seldom. In reply to such a plea, it surely cannot be requisite to say much. Indeed, it would not be necessary to add a single word to the general observations already made, if they to whom this plea may be addressed would at once bring it to the test of reason, instead of being disposed to allow it, as may not improbably be the case, on the authority of those who urge it. It may be sufficient, however, to remark, that, although in matters of indispensable necessity we may be obliged to take a large portion of evil with the good, and to be content if on the whole the latter should preponderate : it is not so with respect to any particular species of amusement. The amusement, whose chief praise is, that it occurs but seldom, ought manifestly to recur never.

It is from a thorough conviction that public entertainments of this nature ought, on moral considerations, to be laid aside, that I have been led to speak thus at length on the subject. At present, they are nearly confined to the precincts of the metropolis, and are not very frequent. But from their

establishment in the capital, from the countenance which they have received from people of rank, from the splendour and the very expensiveness with which they are attended, they seem to possess the powers of attraction which may be likely to win more and more on circles which are called polite: and by degrees on those persons who, however unable to contend in politeness with their superiors, are willing, though at the risk of final ruin, to vie with them in extravagance.

If a public entertainment be of such a nature and tendency that it ought on moral considerations to be laid aside, every person is bound, in point of moral duty, to discountenance it. A truth so plain might, without presumption, look for general acquiescence. "But what," I hear it replied, "can be done by an individual? If I attend the scene of amusement, I am unnoticed in the crowd: if I refrain, my absence is unknown. My example is unperceived, or if perceived, is disregarded: it neither strengthens, nor could invalidate, what has the sanction of general practice. To think that I can reform the world, would be arrogance and folly." This language, which on most occasions is adopted by persons who are in search of apologies for continuing to indulge themselves in a reprehensible gratification is sometimes also the answer of diffident sincerity. The diffident and sincere may, perhaps, be led to suspect the justice of their mode of reasoning, when they reflect, that there is scarcely an enormity prevailing in public or in private life, in the conduct of nations or of individuals, in the management of business or in the pursuit of pleasure, which is not palliated, vindicated, recommended, by the same line of argument. Was our unchristian traffic in slaves the subject of discussion? The radical iniquity of the trade was confessed: but we were told, that if we should renounce it, other nations would continue to carry it on: why then, it was said, are we to desist? Are unwarrantable customs in commercial transactions pointed out? The merchant



admits that there is cause of blame ; but alleges, that he neither instituted nor can abolish the practice : and asks why he is to be more scrupulous than his neighbours. Similar instances might be multiplied to almost any extent. In all cases of this nature, the language of the world is ; If you cannot prevent the commission of a criminal act, why are you to leave to others the profit or the pleasure which will attend it ? The language of Revelation is ; “ Be not a partaker in other men’s sins. Keep thyself pure (k).” The former is the rule by which man is disposed to judge : the latter is the rule by which God will judge. You say that you cannot do any thing towards the reformation of the world. Cannot you reform yourself ? How is a prevailing bad custom of any kind to be extinguished otherwise than by being abandoned by the individuals who have upheld it ? And by what means have you become exempted from the general obligation ? It is of no importance in this view of the question whether thousands will follow your example, or not a single individual will be made better by it. Look to the moral benefit of others : but look first to the moral benefit of that person who has the most at stake in your actions ; look first to yourself.

But the assertion that your example is inconsiderable, and will be inefficacious, deserves a more particular examination. Has example no effect, either to establish or to discountenance a species of public entertainment ? Or is it the example of the female sex only that is without influence ? You reply, that the example of women of elevated station has a most powerful effect : that the entertainments of which we are speaking would have now been far more popular and frequent than they are, if the person most eminent in rank of your own sex in this kingdom had favoured them with her encouragement, instead of meritoriously distinguishing herself by withholding her patronage : and that the pattern

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(k) 1 Tim. v. 22.



exhibited by the wives and daughters of nobility will ever have great and extensive efficacy, as well among others of the same rank, as among their inferiors. This acknowledgement is sufficient: it contains the principle of every concession which can be desired. You are neither a queen, nor of noble birth. Your example will not have the commanding force derived from royalty, nor the attractions which accompany the peeress. It will not draw multitudes in its train: it may influence few; but are you certain that it will influence none? Is it possible for you to know beforehand, that it will not influence one individual? And if it has a beneficial influence on one individual, is this an effect to be despised? Is the very chance of such an effect to be disregarded? But is it not probable, is it not almost certain, that the force of your example will be more widely felt? Put the case fairly to yourself. If a young woman, of your own age and station, and of your own neighbourhood, had declined the public amusement which has given rise to this discussion, and had confessedly declined it for the reasons which have recently been urged against it; would her example have excited no doubts in your own breast? If it had found you involved in doubts, would it not have strengthened them? If it had found you impelled by false shame to act contrary to your judgement, would it not have sustained you? Might not an opposite example on her part have prevented or removed your doubts, or have given false shame the victory over your understanding and your conscience? Might it not have on others the same effect as on yourself? Have you then no sister, no relation, no friend, no acquaintance, whom your example could move? Are you so little loved, so little esteemed, that there is not a single person in your own family, or among your connections, not a single person either in your own situation in life, or of rank somewhat above or somewhat below it, on whom your sentiments and conduct would operate either in the way of recommendation

or the contrary? If this supposition be possible, how must you have lived!

Remember then these two plain and momentous rules of conduct, at which we have arrived. First, that on every occasion you are to act precisely in that manner, which you believe that moral rectitude would of itself require you to adopt independently of any reference to effects which may be produced by your example. And secondly, that whatever may be your station in life, there is no case in which your example cannot do harm; nor any in which it may not do good.

To some persons I may, perhaps, appear to have dwelt on the supposed inefficacy of individual example, and on the duty of abstaining from every proceeding which conscience, previously to all consideration of the probable effect of that example, pronounces to be in itself morally wrong, with an extraordinary degree of particularity and solicitude. I have, in truth, been anxious to explain myself on these topics with perspicuity. For I have been fully conscious, that in pointing out their bearings on the conduct of an individual with respect to one species of public amusement, I have, in fact, been ascertaining two moral rules, which may be applied almost daily and hourly, and to many of the most important occurrences and transactions in life. If these rules have been satisfactorily established, it would be not only superfluous, but tedious, to revive the argument in detail hereafter. I would therefore request the reader to bear them carefully in mind; to consider them as meant to be applied to every branch of moral behaviour which may be discussed in the subsequent pages; and to turn her thoughts to them, and to the reasoning on which they are founded, whenever in the future intercourse of life she shall hear the common but very mistaken opinions, from the effect of which they are designed to guard her, brought forward to influence her conduct.

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE SUBJECT OF AMUSEMENTS CONTINUED.

*Theatrical Entertainments—Musical Entertainments—Sunday Concerts—Dancing—Gaming and Cards—On Excess in the Pursuit of Amusements.*

**T**HEATRICAL Amusements are those which offer themselves to our attention in the next place.

The Stage is an instrument too powerful not to produce visible and extensive effects wherever it is permanently employed. To the sentiments displayed in the tragic or the comic scene, to the examples of conduct afforded by popular characters under interesting circumstances, and to the general tone of manners and morals which pervades dramatic representations, the opinions, the dispositions, and the actions of the frequenters of the theatre will require no trifling degree of similitude. What is heard with admiration and pleasure, will be remembered: what is seen under those impressions, will be imitated. The impression of the sentiment will be, in some measure, modified by the leading qualities and inclinations of the mind of the hearer: and the fidelity with which the example will be copied, will depend on a variety of circumstances favouring or discouraging closeness of imitation. The growth of the plant will vary, as it is fixed in auspicious or in ungenial soil: the quantity of its fruit will be affected by the smiles and frowns of the sky. But there is seldom a soil so ungenial as entirely to obstruct its vegetation; seldom a sky so frowning as for ever to divest it of fertility. From antient times to the present hour the influence of the Stage has been discerned. Has it been the object to inculcate or to explode particular

opinions ; to elevate or to degrade the characters of individuals ; to strengthen or to shake existing forms of government? From the days of Grecian and Roman antiquity, down to the French revolution, the Stage has been an engine eagerly employed by those who have had it under their control. Is its influence unperceived or disregarded in our own country? The legal restraints to which the theatre is subjected, and the stamp of official approbation which every new play must receive before it can be exhibited, answer the question. The lowest orders of the people, mutable, uninformed, and passionately addicted to spectacles of amusement, may probably be acted upon, through the medium of theatrical representations, with greater facility and success than other classes of the community. But, to speak of individuals among the upper and middle ranks of life, young women are the persons likely to imbibe the strongest tinge from the sentiments and transactions set before them in the drama. Openness of heart, warmth of feeling, a lively perception of the ludicrous, a strong sense of the charms of novelty, readiness to adopt opinions recommended by fashion, proneness to give large scope to the influence of association and of sympathy ; these are circumstances which characterise youth, more especially youth in the female sex. And they are circumstances which render those whom they characterise liable, in a peculiar degree, to be practically impressed by the language and examples brought forward on the Stage.

The English Stage has, for a considerable time, laboured under the heavy imputation of being open to scenes and language of gross indelicacy, which foreign theatres would have proscribed. This observation is applicable even to our tragedies. Of English comedy, an eminent writer (*l*) of our

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(*l*) Dr. Blair, in his Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, 4to. vol. ii. p. 547 ; where he quotes several instances in

own country observes, that, although we ourselves overlook its immorality, "all foreigners, the French especially, who "are accustomed to a better regulated and more decent Stage, "speak of it with surprise and astonishment." Of the moral changes which the Stage may have experienced in France since the commencement of the political convulsions which have agitated that country for some years past, and still continue to agitate it, I am not qualified to speak. But, antecedently to those events, it seems to have been the concurrent opinion of competent judges, that, although corruption of manners and of private conduct had arisen at Paris to an excess by no means to be paralleled at London, the drama of the former capital was far superior in purity to that of the latter. Let not this fact be deemed contradictory to the opinion recently given of the powerful effect, which theatrical representations are adapted to produce on the

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confirmation of his remark. Mr Diderot pronounces English comedy to be "without morals." Voltaire, who, undoubtedly, was no rigid moralist, speaks of it in the strongest terms of reprobation. M. Moralt, in his Letters upon the French and English Nations, ascribes the corruption of manners in London to comedy, as its chief cause, "Their comedy," he says, "is like that of no other country. It is the school in which the youth of both sexes familiarise themselves with vice, which is never represented there as vice, but as mere gaiety."

Dr Blair's opinion of the principal of the English comic writers, from the reign of Charles II. to that of George II. is contained in the following sentence: "It is extremely unfortunate that together with the freedom and boldness of the comic spirit in Britain, there should have been joined such a spirit of indecency and licentiousness, as has disgraced English comedy beyond that of any nation since the days of Aristophanes." *Lectures*, vol. ii. p. 542. He adds, p. 547, 548, that "of late years a sensible reformation derived in a considerable degree from the French theatre, has begun to take place." The improvement is unquestionable; but the delicacy and the morality of most of our modern comedies are only comparative.

moral character and behaviour of those who frequent them. In France, public dissoluteness was pushed on by causes from which England has of late been, by the blessing of Providence, exempted; causes which, though capable of deriving strength from a depraved Stage, would not have been efficaciously withstood by the lessons of theatres more pure than those of Paris. Is it necessary to particularise them? The disbelief, general among the higher orders, of a religion depressed, on the one hand by a load of superstition, and assailed, on the other, by writers of eminent talents and reputation and the example of a Court, commonly signalled by unblushing profligacy, and spreading the contagion of vice throughout the empire. We know that in one at least of these particulars, England was unhappy enough, during a part of the last century, to furnish a picture resembling that of France: and we know what was at that period the state of our drama. The torrent of immorality and profaneness, which in the days of Charles the Second, and for a considerable time afterwards, deluged the theatre, has subsided; or is no longer permitted to roll its polluted and infamous tide across the Stage. The glaring colours of vice, which gave no disgust to our ancestors, would shock, if not the virtue, yet the refinement, of a modern audience. Let the friends of religion, of their country, of private worth and of public happiness, be thankful for the change which has taken place. But has the change been complete? Is the British Stage now irreproachable? Does it exhibit no scenes which give pain to modest eyes; no language grating to modest ears? Does it exhibit nothing which a Christian needs to be ashamed of writing, of acting, of witnessing? Or if it be still culpable; is it but rarely, and transiently? Let those who are the best acquainted with the theatre answer these questions to their own consciences. And whenever any woman is deliberating whether she shall or shall not attend the representation of a particular drama,



let her ask herself this additional question among others to be suggested; Whether she is not bound in conscience, if she lays claim to the consistency of a Christian, at once to decide in the negative, unless she has sufficient reason to believe that the former enquiry, viewed as relating to that drama, can with truth, be answered to her satisfaction? Had these pages been addressed to persons of the other sex, the same principles of decision would have been stated as no less clearly incumbent on men.

The Stage is designed to furnish a faithful picture of life and manners. Be it admitted for a moment that the picture is exhibited, and ought to be exhibited, merely for the purpose of amusement. Yet, unless we are to maintain either the absurd proposition, that amusements have no influence on character, or the wicked proposition, that amusements may lawfully be of a corrupting nature; the picture ought, at least, to be such as shall not be injurious to the dispositions of the heart. But when amusement, though it may be the sole object of the careless spectator of the drama, is manifestly not the point in which the whole effect of the representation terminates; when the sentiments delivered, and the line of conduct exemplified, by the favourite actor, in a favourite character, are found by experience to impress kindred opinions, and a tendency to a similar train of proceeding on the audience; the Stage ought to assume a higher office, and to recommend itself as the nurse of virtue (*m*)

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(*m*) The effect produced by Schiller's Tragedy of the Robbers on the scholars at the school of Fribourg, where it was represented soon after its first appearance, is well known. "They were so struck and captivated with the grandeur of the character of its hero, Moor, that they agreed to form a band like his in the forests of Bohemia; had elected a young nobleman for their chief; and had pitched on a beautiful young lady for his Amelia; whom they were to carry off from her parents' house to accompany their flight. To the accomplishment of this design they had bound themselves

If it be false to its trust it forfeits every title to public patronage, and ought to be exploded as a nuisance most dangerous to the community. Is the Stage then, it will be said, to intrude itself into the functions of the pulpit? Are no personages to be introduced on its boards, but women of demure sobriety of demeanor, and men of unimpeachable integrity? Are the attractions of mirth and wit to be disclaimed? Are folly and affectation no longer to be encountered with ridicule? Are villainy and fraud no longer to be chastised with the lash of satire? If the Stage is to be curtailed of its most copious sources of amusement; how is it to interest, how is it to attract spectators? If the mixture of virtue and vice, and the

“by the most solemn and tremendous oaths. But the conspiracy was discovered by an accident, and its execution prevented.” See an Account of the German Theatre by Henry Mackenzie, Esq. in the second volume of the Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

The author of this tragedy has since acknowledged with great candour, and reprobated in the strongest terms, the pernicious tendency of his own production. *Ibid.*

In the same paper it is said that, “soon after the publication of Goethe’s *Sorrows of Werter*, it became a badge of fashion among the young men of Germany to wear as a uniform the dress which Werter is described as having on in one of his interviews with Charlotte.”

“The robberies committed daily in the streets, during the representation of the *Beggars Opera*, were beyond the example of former times. And several thieves and robbers afterwards confessed in Newgate, that they raised their courage in the playhouse by the songs of their hero Macheath, before they sallied forth on their desperate nocturnal exploits. So notorious were the evil consequences of its frequent representation become, that in the year 1713 the Middlesex Justices united with Sir John Fielding in requesting Mr. Garrick to desist from performing it; as they were of opinion that it was never represented on the stage without creating an additional number of real thieves.” See the Life of Gay in the *Biographia Britannica*.

The influence of some other dramas, if less conspicuous in particular instances, has perhaps been on the whole not less prejudicial.

unbounded diversities of character, which prevail in the world, are not to be exhibited, how is a picture of real life and manners to be displayed? The restrictions which, if enforced, would render the spectacles of the Stage irreproachable, are such as would neither lead it from its natural province, nor cripple any of its justifiable powers of entertainment. To constitute a moral Stage, it is not requisite that Lectures on Divinity and Ethics should be read there; nor that the attractions of mirth and wit should be proscribed: nor that worthless characters should be excluded from the drama. But it is necessary that the general effect of the piece should be unequivocally virtuous. It is necessary that neither false principles nor erroneous conclusions in morality should be so brought forward, as to be likely to deceive the understandings, and influence the future conduct of the auditors. It is necessary that *Honour*, the offspring of Pride, should not be enthroned in the place of *Virtue*, the daughter of Religion. It is necessary that mirth and wit should neither directly nor indirectly, openly or covertly, be polluted with the smallest tincture of indelicacy. It is necessary that vice be not clothed in amiable colours; in colours which may disguise its deformity from the spectator, or tempt him to pardon, perhaps to imitate it, for the sake of the engaging qualities with which it is surrounded. He knows little of human nature, who thinks that the youthful mind will be secured from the infecting influence of a vicious character, adorned with polished manners, wit, fortitude, and generosity, by a frigid moral, delivered at the conclusion, or to be deduced from the events of the drama. Neither ought vice ever to be exhibited under any circumstance of open grossness, or what is still worse, of grossness veiled under a mask of decorum. What would not be endured by modest eyes and modest ears in a private company, ought not to be endured upon a Stage. Language which could not be heard, incidents which could not be witnessed, at home without a blush, ought not to be heard or

witnessed abroad. It is not the place, but the circumstance, which corrupts. Among the usual causes by which female modesty is worn away, I know not one more efficacious, than the indelicate scenes and language to which women are familiarised at the theatre. Nor among the causes by which simplicity of manners is corrupted, the habit of viewing with complacence persons of infamous character is acquired, a variety of false principles in morality is upheld, and pride, in particular, under different forms and modifications, is encouraged, can there be named any one apparently more powerful than the Stage

Farther ; it is evident that, when an individual wishes conscientiously to determine whether she can properly give to the theatre and its frequenters the continuance of her presence and example, she ought to extend her views beyond the morality or immorality of particular dramas. She is to take into the account the general effect produced, or likely to be produced, by the Stage ; and to satisfy herself whether the institution is, on the whole, beneficial, or at least harmless, to the community. In this enquiry she is not to overlook the prevailing conduct of the actors and actresses, so far as it may fairly be ascribed to their profession. While the present state of things continues it cannot be wonderful that persons, who are seriously concerned for the most important interests of human beings, and desirous to act in uniform consistency with Christian principles, should be little disposed to countenance an institution, which so often displays incitements to vice, inculcates sentiments and maxims of conduct utterly unchristian, and habitually appears to produce very lamentable effects on a large proportion of those who professionally belong to it (*n*). Will it be said that a truly Christian Stage

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(*n*) The superintendence of the drama, exercised by legal authority to prevent the Stage from being rendered an instrument of political machinations, and of personal calumny and resentment, is extremely useful. Other benefits of the high-

could not in these days support itself? Be that fact as it may; can a follower of Christ encourage any other?

For some years past the custom of acting plays in private theatres, fitted up by individuals of fortune, has occasionally prevailed. It is a custom liable to this objection among others; that it is almost certain to prove, in its effects, particularly injurious to the female performers. Let it be admitted, that theatres of this description no longer present the flagrant impropriety of ladies bearing a part in the drama in conjunction with professed players. Let it be admitted, that the drama selected will be in its language and conduct always irreprehensible. Let it even be admitted that eminent theatrical talents will not hereafter gain admission upon such a Stage for men of ambiguous, or worse than ambiguous,

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est value would attend its exertions, were they directed with an increase of energy to purify the Stage from incidents, expressions, and allusions, offensive to modesty, and injurious to the principles of moral rectitude. Whoever possesses a power of accomplishing a change of such moment to the interests of morality and virtue, cannot but be responsible for the use and for the neglect of it. The influence of the Managers of our Theatres, aided by the authority of the Lord Chamberlain, would probably be adequate to accomplish the purification of the Stage in this one particular. But if not, there is a quarter from which it might be effected at once. To those who act under a Royal Licence, a single hint from Royal Authority would be sufficient. The respect due to wishes intimated from that authority would, of itself, insure the rejection of every future composition contaminated with indelicacy or profaneness; and the omission of every scene, passage, and expression, liable to a similar objection in any of the performances, whether of ancient or of modern date, already in possession of the Stage. Nor could the interposition, to which I have ventured to allude, fail of proving in its consequences an act of extreme kindness to the performers at the public Theatres. That dissoluteness of manners and conduct, which, whatever meritorious exceptions may exist, is admitted to be prevalent among them, cannot but be ascribed in part to the profane and profligate language put into their mouths by the authors whose works they exhibit.



character. Take the benefit of all these favourable circumstances: yet, what is even then the tendency of such amusements? To encourage vanity; to excite a thirst of applause and admiration on account of attainments which, if they are to be thus exhibited, it would commonly have been far better for the individual not to possess; to destroy diffidence by the unrestrained familiarity with persons of the other sex, which inevitably results from being joined with them in the drama; to create a general fondness for the perusal of plays, of which so many are improper to be read; and for attending dramatic representations, of which so many are unfit to be witnessed. Most of these remarks fully apply to the practice of causing children to act plays, or parts of plays; a practice of which parents, while labouring to vindicate it, sometimes pronounce an emphatical condemnation, by avowing a future purpose of abandoning it so soon as their children shall be far advanced in youth.

Another class of public amusements comprises those in which Music constitutes the principal share, or the whole, of the entertainment. To the first of these descriptions Operas belong. As they may, in some measure, also be regarded in the light of dramatic performances, most of the remarks already offered on the subject of the Stage may be extended to them. The dances which accompany them, or the dresses of the performers, are not unfrequently such as ought not for a moment to be tolerated by modest spectators. The public or private entertainments which consist wholly of music are commonly so free in their own nature from objectionable circumstances, as not to require particular observation. It must, however, be added, that the songs introduced are sometimes worse than foolish; and that private concerts in high life are now conducted on so large a scale, as frequently to subject ladies who perform in them to some of the dangers, which have recently been mentioned as awaiting the female performer in private theatres.



When it was said, that private musical entertainments are commonly free from circumstances intrinsically objectionable; the benefit of the concession must not be extended to one, which fashion has recently imported from the Continent and established in the Capital, namely, meetings for the purpose of hearing music on Sunday evenings. Such meetings have been encouraged, and frequented, not only by those ladies who are always ready to take wing to every scene of resort and entertainment; but by some who may be supposed no strangers to sentiments of piety, and are professedly solicitous for the external observances of religion. I speak not of concerts, which, under the specious name of sacred music, a name countenanced merely by a scanty admixture of religious performances interspersed for the purposes of decorum and delusion, are in no material respect, except in hypocrisy, different from those which are usual on the common days of the week. The tendency of such concerts, and the motives of those who institute them, are too plain to need illustration. The meetings to which alone I mean to refer, are those which are in reality such as they profess to be; meetings intended for the exclusive performance of music adapted to the day. Their effects, however, are, in various ways, likely to be such as will be very far from extending the influence of religion; and such, therefore, as ought not to be aided by the countenance of its friends. The glow of devotion which is kindled in the breast by proper music, in a proper place, is most favourable to holiness. And far be it from me to intimate, that sacred music is to be confined to the walls of a church. Let it hallow private houses; and not on Sundays only, but on all days. On the evening of the Sabbath in particular, let its efficacy be called in to revive the attention and excite the ardour of piety. But let the performers and the auditors be the members of the family. Or, if admittance be granted to any other person, let it be only to the intimate friend who

comes without parade, and comes for the purpose of uniting in an act of religion. If you fling open your doors to numbers ; if you prepare yourself and your house as for the customary reception of company ; if your servants are occupied in the same hurry of attendance as at a ball or an assembly ; if the street rings with the tumult, and is obstructed with the chariots of your visitors : can you think that religion will, on the whole, be promoted by the employment of the evening ? Your intentions, be it acknowledged, have been pure. The music has been well selected. It has been performed throughout by persons not hired from the theatre, nor hired at all. You have felt, during the performance, the warmth of religious gratitude, and breathed the sincerity of prayer. Consider, then, what may be stated, even while you take the advantage of these most favourable circumstances, on the adverse side of the question. You have distracted your thoughts, and wasted your time beforehand by the bustle of preparation. You have deprived your domestics of the best opportunity which the week affords them for religious thought. You have lost the advantage of the calm and uninterrupted devotion, which you might have practised during the time occupied by the concert, either in private, or in conjunction with your family. You have disturbed the quiet of a neighbourhood, employed perhaps better than yourself. You have exhibited to the undiscerning multitude the appearance of being engaged on the Sabbath, as at other times, in the pursuit of amusement. You have initiated or confirmed them in want of reverence for a day which, had it not been for the effect of your example, they might have continued, or might have learned, to keep holy.

It may be proper to observe in this place, that the practice of opening your house on Sunday evenings to the influx of all your acquaintance who may choose to frequent it as a scene of resort and conversation, a practice by no means

unexampled in the polite world, is productive of all the mischiefs which arise from the Sunday concert ; and is devoid of the ostensible excuse by which, in the other case, they are palliated.

Another class of public diversions comprehends those meetings in which the professed amusement is Dancing ; an amusement in itself both innocent and salubrious, and therefore by no means improper, under suitable regulations, to constitute the occasional entertainment of youth. In the ball-room, however, a young woman has more temptations to encounter than she has experienced at the public or at the private concert. At the former of these scenes of musical festivity, she may have felt the difficulty of repressing sensations of vanity as to personal appearance ; at the latter, she may have also been assailed by emotions allied to envy in consequence of the superior performance of another. But the objects which, during the season of youth, most easily excite vanity and envy in the female breast, are those which are presented in the ball-room. This is deemed the stage for displaying the attractions, by the possession of which a young woman is apt to be most elated ; and they are here displayed under circumstances most calculated to call forth the triumph and the animosities of personal competition. This triumph, and these animosities, betray themselves occasionally to the least discerning eye. But were the recesses of the heart laid open, how often would the sight of a stranger, of an acquaintance, even of a friend, superior for the evening in the attractions of dress, or enjoying the supposed advantage of having secured a wealthier, a more lively, a more graceful, or a more fashionable partner, be found to excite feelings of disgust, and of aversion not always stopping short of malevolence ! How often would the passions be seen inflamed, and every nerve agitated, by a thirst for precedence, and invention be observed labouring to mortify a rival by the affectation of indifference or of contempt !

But if a young woman cannot partake of the amusements of a ball-room, except at the expence of benevolence, of friendship, of diffidence, of sincerity, of good humour, at the expence of some Christian disposition, some Christian virtue ; she has no business there. The recreation, to others innocent, is, to her, a sin.

An evil, of great moment, which is too frequently known to occur at the places of amusement now under notice, is the introduction of women to undesirable and improper acquaintance among the other sex ; undesirable and improper, as I would now be understood to mean, in a moral point of view. Men of this description commonly abound at all scenes of public resort and entertainment ; and are not seldom distinguished by fortune and birth, gay and conciliating manners, and every qualification which is needful to procure a favourable reception in polite company. Hence, when they propose themselves as partners in an assembly-room, a lady does not always find it easy, according to the rules of decorum, to decline the offer : and is sometimes enticed by their external appearance, and by having seen other ladies ambitious of dancing with them, into a reprehensible inclination not to decline it. The good principles or the worldly prudence of the relations or the friends who accompany her, will, in many cases, guard her from falling, though but for a single evening, into such hands. But the solicitude of relations and friends is sometimes directed exclusively to another object. They spare no pains to preserve her from dancing with a person in rank or connections inferior to herself ; and having gained that point, are contented. If their conscience be apt to slumber, it behoves her own to be the more wakeful. If the alternative be, whether she will incur the risk, nay, the certainty, of sitting still during every dance, or give her hand to a partner whose offer, as she knows, or strongly apprehends, ought on principles of moral rectitude not to be accepted ; the proper decision

cannot long appear doubtful to modesty and consideration. The present custom of changing partners at stated intervals is evidently attended with this bad consequence, that it increases the difficulty of avoiding an objectionable associate. Yet it has also the advantage of relieving a young woman the sooner from such an associate, to whom she may unwarily have engaged herself.

Women in various occurrences of life are betrayed, by a dread of appearing ungenteelly bashful, and by a desire of rendering themselves agreeable, into an indiscreet freedom of manners and conversation with men of whom they know perhaps but little; and still more frequently into a greater degree of freedom with those of whom they have more knowledge, than can fitly be indulged except towards persons with whom they are connected by consanguinity or particular ties. The temptation is in no place more powerful than in a ball-room. Let not indiscriminate familiarity be shewn towards all partners; nor injudicious familiarity towards any. To reject every boisterous and unbecoming mode of dancing, and to observe in every point the strictest modesty in attire, are cautions on which, in addressing women of delicacy, it is surely needless to insist.

In particularising the different classess of female amusements now prevailing, it is with deep regret that I perceive the necessity of adding the gaming-table to the number. The occupations of that scene of anxiety, of passion, and of guilt, were once in the almost exclusive possession of men. It was but seldom that an individual of the other sex copied the infamous example. And when she copied it, the imitation was attempted on an humble scale: and was carried on with a certain attention to privacy and decorum, which evinced a mind not altogether hardened by the practice of criminality, nor prepared to insult the laws of the country with public manifestations of contempt. But in high life there are now to be found those who have discarded the



restraints of timidity and of shame. Relying on the influence of rank and fashion, they spread their nets without disguise; and exult in seeing the destructive circle thronged with married women and unmarried, old and young, venturing to the very borders of ruin, alike regardless of consequences immediate or remote (*n*). In this promiscuous

(*n*) The very meritorious and intelligent author of "A Treatise on the Police of the Metropolis," affirms in his introductory address to the reader, (2d. edit. p. xi.) that at this time (1796) there are in Westminster at least forty houses open for the express purpose of play, where Faro Banks are kept, or where Hazard, Rouge à noir, and other illegal games are introduced. Of these gaming tables he proceeds to state that "*five are kept in the houses of ladies of fashion, who are said to receive fifty pounds each rout, besides one-eighth of the profits.*" Recurring to the same subject in another part of his work, he makes the following remarks, among many others which well deserve the attention of every person who upholds or is tempted to visit a gaming table.

"By the 12th of George the Second, the games of Faro, Hazard, &c are declared to be lotteries, subjecting the persons who keep them to a penalty of two hundred pounds, and those who play to fifty pounds. One witness only is necessary to prove the offence before any justice of the peace, who forfeits ten pounds if he neglects to do his duty. And by the 8th of George the First, the keeper of a Faro Table may be prosecuted for a lottery, where the penalty is five hundred pounds.

"Such has been the anxiety of the legislature to suppress Faro Tables and other games of chance, that the severest penalties have been inflicted, founded on the pernicious consequences of such practices; and yet, to the disgrace of the Police of the Metropolis, houses are opened under the sanction of high sounding names, where an indiscriminate mixture of all ranks is to be found, from the finished sharper, to the raw inexperienced youth; and where all those evils exist in full force, which it was the object of the legislature to remove.

"The idle vanity of being introduced into what is supposed to be genteel society, where a fashionable name announces an intention of seeing company, has



assemblage of the plunderers, and the plundered, she who has been hackneyed in the ways of polite life learns to join with her other acquisitions the talents, the pursuits, and the morals of a professed gamester. In the mean time the artless and inexperienced, dazzled by surrounding example, drop their scruples and their apprehensions one by one; and are gradually allured forward from the low stake which at first was all that they proposed to hazard, to risk on one card, or one throw of the dice, sums which bear a considerable proportion to the whole property which they possess, and even to the whole amount of their future expectations. It is no exaggeration to affirm that there are recent instances of young women having speedily lost at play their entire fortunes. And situations of pecuniary distress which, though very grievous, fall short of absolute ruin, are continually seen to arise from the same causes. But does the mischief terminate, does it chiefly consist, in pecuniary distress? If

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“been productive of more *domestic misery* and more  
“*real distress, poverty, and wretchedness to families* in  
“this great metropolis, who but for their folly might have  
“been easy and comfortable, than many volumes could  
“detail.”

“A mistaken sense of what constitutes human happiness  
“leads the mass of the people, who have the means of  
“moving, in any degree, above the middle ranks of life,  
“into the fatal error of mingling in what is erroneously  
“called genteel company; if that can be called such,  
“where Faro Tables and other games of hazard are intro-  
“duced in private families; where the least recommen-  
“dation (and sharpers spare no pains to obtain recommen-  
“dations) admits all ranks who can exhibit a genteel  
“exterior; and where the young and inexperienced are  
“initiated in every propensity tending to debase the human  
“character, and taught to view with contempt every  
“acquirement connected with those duties, which lead to  
“domestic happiness, or to those objects of utility which  
“can render either sex respectable in the world.” P. 150

a school is to be sought where the serenity of the female mind may be supplanted by the most violent and the blackest passions ; where the springs of benevolence and charity, of sympathy and friendship may be dried up, and the heart consigned for ever to obdurate selfishness ; where the foundations of domestic misery, of angry discontent, of blasted hopes and unavailing sorrows may be laid ; where every principle of delicacy, of virtue, of religion may be sapped, and prepared to be offered up on some pressing emergency as a sacrifice to money : let that school be sought at a gaming table, upheld by some person of fashionable estimation. It is extremely to be lamented that women of respectability of character, women attentive on many occasions to the dictates not of prudence only but of conscience, and so deeply convinced of the dreadful evils attendant on gaming as scrupulously and at all times to abstain from play, should yet follow the stream of custom so far as to be visitors and spectators in the rooms, in which this system of iniquity and depredation is carrying on. To countenance by their presence an assembly known to be held for a purpose which it is impossible for them to approve, is the height of inconsistency. It is to add to wickedness the apparent sanction of their authority. It is to silence the doubts of the wavering ; and to preclude the inconsiderate from reflection. It is to contribute to extend a most destructive practice to ranks of society which it has not yet polluted. It is to encourage those nuisances to the community, who dare to stand forward in fashionable life as the institutors and patrons of the Faro Bank and the Hazard Table ; whose effrontery, while it yet continues to escape the strong arm of legal justice which arrests inferior and less pernicious offenders, ought to be encountered with universal resistance, and be constrained to read in every eye the language of detestation.

A passion for gaming, so easy to be excited, is one of

the propensities most difficult to be repressed. In barbarous as well as in polished nations, in the lowest as well as in the highest ranks of society, the flame once kindled, is scarcely to be extinguished. So captivating to most minds is the succession of situations unforeseen, uncertain, and characterised by vicissitude ; so interesting is the pause of suspense between hope and fear ; such is the confidence which almost every person places, if not on his skill yet on his good fortune ; that we cannot wonder if they to whom frequent temptations are presented should by degrees be ensnared in defiance of previous resolves, and ultimately lose sight not only of prudence, but even of far superior principles of conduct. Hence to guard against those small beginnings, by which consequences so deplorable may be entailed, is a duty of no little importance in the scale of moral obligation. Some persons, at present too cautious to adventure as parties in the game, think that they need not scruple to indulge themselves in hazarding small bets on the event of it. But they who begin with venturing small sums, easily learn to risk larger. And they who, without playing themselves, make their own profit or loss to depend on the success of an individual engaged in the contest, are themselves gamblers. Others see no danger in the habit of frequenting the card table, provided that much money is not involved. To devote the evening to cards where the stakes are high, is manifestly to cherish a passion for gaming : when they are low, it is yet to encourage that passion, though in an inferior degree. The existence of a stake, however minute, proves that application is made to the avaricious feelings of the mind ; feelings which, ere long, will commonly look out for a more powerful stimulus. In proportion too as practice confers skill, or creates a persuasion that it is possessed, the desire of displaying it, perhaps also of turning it to profit, is often seen to arise.

If we set aside meetings professedly or intentionally held for the purpose of gaming, the principal evil attending the

use of cards may, perhaps, be fairly stated to consist not so much in the reprehensible passions which they excite, as in the quantity of time which they consume. In many families, particularly in provincial towns, they regularly enter as the tea-table departs, and occupy several hours of the evening. In some houses, where patience is weaker, they appear speedily after dinner. A considerable portion of every day, Sundays excepted, an exception which in the country may yet be commonly made, is thus rendered a mere blank; it is cut, as it were, out of life, and consigned, upon the most favourable supposition, to vacuity and oblivion. What might have been the improvement made, the knowledge acquired, the rational pleasure enjoyed, had these hours been habitually allotted to instructive conversation or interesting books? Had it been the custom of the family to allot them to such employment before a passion for cards was become inveterate; habit would then have operated in support of a judicious and useful mode of passing time as strenuously as it now works in upholding a puerile and unprofitable occupation. And a proposal to exchange the usual delights of the afternoon and evening for a pool at quadrille, and a rubber at whist, would have been received with the disgust which would, at present, attach on the adventurous reformer, who should recommend, when the card-tables are now set, and the partners taking their places, to prefer listening to the page of Robertson to practising the rules of Hoyle. "Man," it has been well observed, "is a bundle of habits." Life is made up of principles and actions familiarised and confirmed by custom. The uncouth fashions in dress and personal demeanour, the senseless decorations in building and in furniture, which have universally prevailed in different periods, and the most unnatural modes of ornamenting nature which have had polished nations for their admirers from the days of Pliny to those of George the Second, shew, with numberless other instances which might be particularised that there is nothing

so absurd and extravagant which the eye cannot by use convert into a beauty, and the mind into a gratification. Nor is there any employment so trifling, that it cannot be rendered, by uniform practice, necessary to comfort. Were a family to be long accustomed, with the same regularity with which many dedicate a portion of the day to cards, to amuse themselves during some hours of every evening in picking and measuring straws from wheat-sheaves, placed before each individual for that purpose; an interruption of the custom would be felt at first as a loss of one of the essential enjoyments of life, and would leave for a time a vacancy scarcely to be supplied. Hence appears the importance of guarding in the outset against contracting a habit so enervating. The first links are imperceptible: but the chain once formed, is scarcely to be broken.

As the recreation of the old and the infirm, at times when the mind is too weak or too much fatigued to receive pleasure from a cheerful book or cheerful discourse, cards may occasionally have their use. "And is this," the indignant votary of the card-table exclaims, "the only merit to be ascribed to them?" I would not unfairly detract even from any supposed merit which they may possess. It is possible that they may have their use in providing employment for the motley groupes, which are sometimes assembled together at the party of a lady of fashion. It is expected, no doubt, that a large majority of the persons collected on such occasions will neither be qualified to join in rational and entertaining conversation, nor capable of listening with satisfaction to those who thus converse; and preparations are made accordingly. The kindness of the intention, and the sagacity of the contrivance, merit praise. But let the healthy be tender of enervating on the remedies provided for the sick. In an age which is not exempt from the charge of undervaluing distinctions established for the benefit of society, let proper deference be shewn to a regulation, which must be deemed



intended to discriminate mental incapacity from communicative intelligence. Cards too are celebrated for their efficacy in enlivening the dulness of a country visit. When the dinner, and the desert, and the tea-table, have exhausted their gratification; when the elegance of the drawing-room has been admired in detail, and the prospect from the windows can no longer be discerned; when the parrot and the lap-dog have been praised, till invention can supply no additional terms of eulogium; when each lady has already treasured in her mind every item of the dress of every other, but is obliged to suspend her criticisms until the departure of the object of them: what resource, we are asked, what possible occupation remains, except cards? To the unfurnished mind, none.

The apology which is sometimes made for the general introduction of cards, namely, that they prevent conversation from degenerating into slander and themes of scandal, is a vindication which was not to have been expected from the mouth of a person of the female sex, nor from the mouth of any individual accustomed to regard that sex with esteem. It is, perhaps, one of the most pointed sarcasms that could have been directed against those persons in whose behalf it is alleged. Are we to have such an opinion of feminine justice, benevolence, delicacy, and candour, as to conclude that women cannot pass a single evening otherwise than in the indulgence of detraction, unless their thoughts be occupied by the card-table: that their tongues, unless charmed to silence by attention to the game, will be incessantly exercised by calumny and malice? She of whom this representation can with truth be given, has no time to throw away upon trifles. Objects of higher moment than visits and amusements claim her undivided care; retirement, reflection, self-knowledge, the acquisition of Christian principles, the purification of a corrupted heart.

Though some few individuals of the female sex may be



observed to take their places among sportsmen in the field ; the fashion, happily, is not so prevalent as to entitle fox-hunting and similar occupations, to rank among feminine amusements. It would be no easy task to shew that to seek *diversion* through the medium of shedding blood, causing torture, or taking away happiness, befits persons of the other sex who profess a Christian spirit, or who lay claim to cultivated understandings and benevolent hearts. But however that question be decided, the rude clamour, the boisterous exertions, and the cruel spectacles of field sports, are wholly discordant, when contrasted with the delicacy, the refinement, and the sensibility of a woman.

The reflections which have hitherto been offered on the subject of amusements, have left without adequate notice a material circumstance operating more powerfully in the case of some amusements, than in that of others ; yet, in a certain measure, common to all. The inquiry has, in most instances, been almost exclusively directed to ascertain, whether the amusement specified was, in its nature and circumstances, innocent. But there is a danger which is attached even to innocent amusements ; the danger of pursuing them to excess. A possession which we have always in our hands, which every person around us appears to have equally with ourselves, is a possession of the value of which we are most likely to be ignorant or regardless. Such a possession is time. Men, who are stimulated to intellectual exertions by the concurrence of various motives, either unknown to the female sex, or known only in an inferior degree ; men, to whom business is in one shape or in another continually presenting itself ; whom the capacity of attaining to professional honour and emolument, and the attractions of the field of literature, of which until of late years they have almost enjoyed a monopoly, might tempt to cultivate their understandings, and to apply their talents to purposes of utility ; frequently consign themselves to a laborious life of amusement : a life

which, even if all their modes of amusement had been in themselves irreproachable, would not have been more useful and respectable than an equal period of obstinate inactivity. Devoting their mornings to the billiard-room, and their evenings to the gaming-table; occupied in superintending the training of race-horses and in witnessing, with unfeeling delight, their exertions on the course; or employed in the unremitting pursuit and destruction of various parts of the animal world; they live without reflection on the great objects of human existence, neither benefited by its progress, nor preparing for its termination. A picture similar to this in its outline and composition, though differing in the particular objects presented to the eye of the spectator, might be drawn from female life. Gay, elegant, and accomplished, but thoughtless, immersed in trifles, and hurrying with impatience, never satisfied, from one scene of diversion to another; how many women are seen floating down the stream of life, like bubbles on which the sun paints a thousand gaudy colours; and like bubbles vanishing, sooner or later, one after another, and leaving no trace of usefulness behind! They do not, like bubbles, vanish for ever; but after death must awake from the infatuated dream of idleness and dissipation, to render an account of wasted time and talents to an Almighty Judge. The scriptural censure of those who are “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God (o),” a censure, the proper force of which may be estimated by attending to the other characters included in the same catalogue by the Apostle, pertains not to those persons only who indulge themselves in gratifications in their own nature criminal. It belongs in due proportion to all who sacrifice duty to pleasure; to all who elevate amusements above the rank which they

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(o) 2 Tim. iii. 4.—See also some of the preceding and of the subsequent verses.

ought to hold in the mind of a Christian ; to all who addict themselves to the pursuit of entertainment with an ardour, or to an extent, which so intrudes on their attention and their time, as to prevent them from improving their understandings, cultivating piety and benevolence of heart, and discharging the relative duties of life, with diligence and fidelity ; to all, in other words, who, whatever may be the nature of their amusements, follow them, or any one of them, to excess. So disposed is the human mind to open itself to pleasurable impressions, that at all periods until age or sorrow has destroyed the relish for amusements, and above all other seasons, during the susceptibility of youth, excess is to be apprehended. The object which has delighted us once, we feel assured will delight us again. And though the trial should terminate in disappointment, or repetition should convert satisfaction into weariness ; we seek to fill up the void not by searching after pleasures of a higher nature, but by eagerly catching at gratifications similar to that, the delusive nature of which we have so lately experienced. The very circumstance of an amusement being innocent, renders its attractions the more likely to acquire unreasonable power over the unsuspecting breast of simplicity. It excites no alarm ; it bears no features of deformity : the time which it occupies is speedily gone, and leaves no disagreeable recollection. It may be long before a young woman is led to discern, in her own case, that an action individually blameless may, by frequency, become criminal ; and to perceive the deficiency of all that she has done in the line of improvement and utility by considering what she might have done.

Among the unhappy effects which attend an immoderate and confirmed thirst for amusements, this is one of the most lamentable ; that the malady is fitly ranked among the mental disorders most difficult to cure. Like the dropsy, it is distinguished by a burning desire for the indulgences most adverse to the diminution of the complaint ; a desire so intense

as scarcely to permit the sufferer to advert to any other object. The mind, unaccustomed to serious reflection, softened and enfeebled by relaxing habits, turns with disgust from argument and intelligence ; clings to the trifles in which it has long delighted ; and is almost incapable for a time either of seeking, or of receiving, gratification from better pursuits. The self-denial, the painful efforts, requisite to break the shackles of habit, are fully known to those only, by whom the shackles of habit have been broken. Let every woman beware of being imperceptibly betrayed into fetters from which, without such self-denial, such painful efforts, she cannot be extricated ; yet from which it is necessary that she should be extricated, if she is to lead a life useful to others, ultimately comfortable to herself, and calculated to obtain the approbation of Heaven.

The risk to which a young woman is exposed of contracting a habit of excessive fondness for amusements, depends not only on the particular propensities of her mind, but also on the place and situation in which she principally resides. To the daughter of a country gentleman, though her heart should be fixed on company and diversions, the paternal mansion, insulated in its park, or admitting no contiguous habitations except the neighbouring hamlet, seldom furnishes the opportunity of access to a perpetual circle of amusements. Visitors are not always to be found in the drawing-room ; the card-table cannot always be filled up ; the county town affords a ball but once in a month ; and domestic circumstances perversely arise to obstruct regularity of attendance. Suppose then a young woman thus situated to labour under the heavy disadvantage of not having had her mind directed by education to proper objects. Finding herself obliged to procure, by her own efforts, the entertainment which she is frequently without the means of obtaining from others ; she is excited to some degree of useful exertion. Family conversation, needle-work, a book, even a book that is not a novel,

in a word, any occupation is found preferable to the tediousness of a constant want of employment. Thus the foundation of some domestic habits is laid: or, if the habits were previously in existence, they are strengthened, or at least are preserved from being obliterated. She who is fixed in a country town, where society is always within reach, and something in the way of petty amusement is ever going forward, or may easily be set on foot, may with greater facility contract a habit of flying from a companion, who, if insipid and unpleasing to her, will be of all companions the most insipid and unpleasing, herself. But it is in the metropolis that amusements, and all the temptations which flow from amusements, are concentrated. So various are the scenes of public diversion, so various the parties of private entertainment, which London affords in the evening; so numerous are the spectacles and exhibitions of wonders in nature or in art, and the attractive occupations properly to be classed under the head of amusement, which obtrude on the leisure of morning in the capital and its environs; so magnetic is the example of wealth, and rank, and fashion, that she who approaches the stream with a mind unsteadied by those principles of moderation and sobriety which are essential to the Christian character, will probably be hurried away far from her proper course, or even sucked into the vortex, and whirled, day after day, and year after year, in a never-ending round of giddiness and dissipation.

If the metropolis be the spot in which the danger of becoming absorbed in amusements is most formidable; the scenes of resort, whether inland or on the sea-coast, which are distinguished by the general denomination of Public Places, exhibit it in a degree but little inferior. Of such places, the predominant spirit is thoughtlessness. And thoughtlessness, ever weary of its own vacuity, flies with restless ardour from diversion to diversion; and rouses into



action the inherent love of entertainment, which in most persons, requires rather to be moderated than to be inflamed. The contagion spreads, in the first place, among those whose presence is owing to other causes than sickness: but, in a short time, it extends to many persons who are come in quest of health; and often affects them so powerfully, that the hurry of the evening more than counterbalances the salubrious influence of air and of waters. Let it be remembered, however, that there is no place which affords an exemption from the obligation of rational pursuits and mental improvement; nor any place which does not afford opportunities for rational pursuits and mental improvement to those who are inclined to make use of them.

The true secret of happiness is to learn to place delight in the performance of duty. This temper, the temper of a genuine Christian, represses, in proportion as it is acquired, the feverish thirst for amusements. Motives which address themselves to the understanding may check that thirst occasionally and partially: this goes to the source of the evil, by fixing the remedy in the heart.

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## CHAPTER X.

### ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF TIME.

**T**IME is a sacred trust consigned to us by the Creator of the universe. To use it well is a lesson, which duty and interest concur to suggest. The duration of the period to be confided to our management, though predetermined from the beginning in the counsels of Omniscience, is undisclosed to the individual concerned, and is placed beyond the reach of every principle of calculation; that ignorance and uncer-



tainty respecting the future may operate as a continual and powerful admonition wisely to employ the present hour. The passing moment, incapable of being recalled, and if once wasted, wasted for ever, reiterates the admonition. Would you perceive, even now, in their true colours the ingratitude and the folly of squandering so precious a deposit? Reflect on the gracious purposes, for the accomplishment of which it is committed to you. Reflect how plainly incompatible a habit of squandering it is, with the frame of mind which is the fruit of Christianity. Reflect on the infinite importance which you will hereafter attach to time past, when the consequences flowing from the right or the wrong use of it will be discerned and felt by you in their full extent.

To occupy the mind with useful employments, is among the best methods of guarding it from surrendering itself to dissipation. To occupy it with such employments regularly, is among the best methods of leading it to love them. Young women sometimes complain, and more frequently the complaint is made for them, that they have nothing to do. Yet few complaints are urged with less foundation. To prescribe to a young person of the female sex the precise occupations to which she should devote her time, is impossible. It would be to attempt to limit, by inapplicable rules, duties which must vary according to circumstances which cannot previously be ascertained. Differences in point of health, of intellect, of taste, and a thousand nameless particularities of family occurrences and local situation, claim, in each individual case, to be taken into the account. Some general reflections, however, may be offered.

I advert not yet to the occupations which flow from the duties of matrimonial life. When, to the rational employments open to all women, the entire superintendence of domestic œconomy is added; when parental cares and duties press forward to assume the high rank in a mother's breast

to which they are entitled ; to complain of the difficulty of finding proper methods of occupying time, would be a lamentation which nothing but politeness could preserve from being received by the auditor with a smile. But in what manner, I hear it replied, are they, who are not wives and mothers, to busy themselves ? Even at present young women in general, notwithstanding all their efforts to quicken and enliven the slow-paced hours, appear, if we may judge from their countenances and their language, not unfrequently to feel themselves unsuccessful. If dress then, and the affairs and employments which you class collectively under the head of dissipation, are not to be allowed to fill so large a space in the course of female life as they now overspread ; and your desire extremely to curtail them in the exercise of this branch of their established prerogative is by no means equivocal ; how are well-bred women to support themselves in the single state through the dismal vacuity that seems to await them ? This question it may be sufficient to answer by another. If young and well-bred women are not accustomed, in their single state, regularly to assign a large proportion of their hours to serious and instructive occupations : what prospect, what hope is there, that when married, they will assume habits to which they have ever been strangers, and exchange idleness and volatility for steadiness and exertion.

To every woman, whether single or married, the habit of regularly allotting to improving books a portion of each day, and, as far as may be practicable, at stated hours, cannot be too strongly recommended. I use the term *improving* in a large sense ; as comprehending all writings which may contribute to her virtue, her usefulness, and her innocent satisfaction, to her happiness in this world and in the next. She who believes that she is to survive in another state of being through eternity, and is duly impressed by the awful conviction, will fix day by day her most serious thoughts on the

inheritance to which she aspires. Where her treasure is, there will her heart be also. She will not be seduced from an habitual study of the Holy Scriptures, and of other works calculated to imprint on her bosom the comparatively small importance of the pains and pleasures of this period of existence; and to fill her with that knowledge, and inspire her with those views and dispositions, which may lead her to delight in the present service of her Maker, and enable her to rejoice in the contemplation of futurity. With the time allotted to the regular perusal of the word of God, and of performances which inculcate the principles and enforce and illustrate the rules of Christian duty, no other kind of reading ought to be permitted to interfere. At other parts of the day let history, let biography, let poetry, or some of the various branches of elegant and profitable knowledge, pay their tribute of instruction and amusement. But let her studies be confined within the strictest limits of purity. Let whatever she peruses in her most private hours be such as she needs not to be ashamed of reading aloud to those whose good opinion she is most anxious to deserve. Let her remember that there is an all-seeing eye, which is ever fixed upon her, even in her closest retirement. Let her not indulge herself in the frequent perusal of writings, however interesting in their nature, however eminent in a literary point of view, which are likely to inflame pride, and to inspire false notions of generosity, of feeling, of spirit, or of any other quality deemed to contribute to excellence of character. Such unhappily are the effects to be apprehended from the works even of several of our distinguished writers, in prose or in verse. And let her accustom herself regularly to bring the sentiments which she reads, and the conduct which is described in terms, more or less strong, of applause and recommendation, to the test of Christian principles. In proportion as this practice is pursued or neglected, reading will be profitable, or pernicious.

There is one species of writings which obtains from a considerable proportion of the female sex a reception much more favourable than is accorded to other kinds of composition more worthy of encouragement. It is scarcely necessary to add the name of novels and of romances. Works of this nature not unfrequently deserve the praise of ingenuity of plan and contrivance, of accurate and well supported discrimination of character, and of force and elegance of language. Some of them have professedly been composed with a design to favour the interests of morality. And among those which are deemed to have on the whole a moral tendency, a very few perhaps might be selected, which are not liable to the disgraceful charge of being occasionally contaminated by incidents and passages unfit to be presented to the reader. This charge, however, may so very generally be alleged with justice, that even of the novels which possess high and established reputation, by far the greater number is totally improper, in consequence of such admixture, to be perused by the eye of delicacy. Poor indeed are the services rendered to virtue by a writer, however he may boast that the object of his performance is to exhibit the vicious as infamous and unhappy, who, in tracing the progress of vice to infamy and unhappiness, introduces the reader to scenes and language adapted to wear away the quick feelings of modesty, which form at once the ornament and the safeguard of innocence ; and like the bloom upon a plum, if once effaced, commonly disappear for ever. To indulge in a practice of reading novels is, in several other particulars, liable to produce mischievous effects. Such compositions are, to most persons, extremely engaging. That story must be singularly barren, or wretchedly told, of which, after having heard the beginning, we desire not to know the end. To the pleasure of learning the ultimate fortunes of the heroes and heroines of the tale, the novel commonly adds, in a greater or in a less degree, that which arises from animated description, from

lively dialogue, or from interesting sentiment. Hence the perusal of one publication of this class leads, with much more frequency than is the case with respect to works of other kinds, (except perhaps of dramatic writings, to which most of the present remarks may be transferred) to the speedy perusal of another. Thus a habit is formed, at first of limited indulgence, but that is continually found more formidable and more encroaching. The appetite becomes too keen to be denied: and in proportion as it is more urgent, grows less nice and select in its fare. What would formerly have given offence, now gives none. The palate is vitiated or made dull. The produce of the book-club, and the contents of the circulating library, are devoured with indiscriminate and insatiable avidity (*p*). Hence the mind is secretly corrupted. Let it be observed too, that in exact correspondence with the increase of a passion for reading novels, an aversion to reading of a more improving nature will gather strength. Even in the class of novels least objectionable in point of delicacy, false sentiment unfitting the mind for sober life, applause and censure distributed amiss, morality estimated by an erroneous standard, and the capricious laws and empty sanctions of honour set up in the place of religion, are the lessons usually presented. There is yet another consequence too important to be overlooked. The catastrophe

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(*p*) Of the books provided by most of the Circulating Libraries now so generally established, the principal part consists of novels; and the passion for that species of reading may almost universally be gratified at a trifling expence. The mischief done is extreme; and its worst effects are on the female mind. Book-clubs, which under regulations sufficiently strict may be the means of conveniently obtaining much pleasure and instruction, are frequently contaminated by publications breathing the contagion of folly and vice. These books travel in routine from house to house, obtrude themselves on those who would not have sought for them, and seldom depart unperused.



and the incidents of these fictitious narratives commonly turn on the vicissitudes and effects of a passion the most powerful of all those which agitate the human heart. Hence the study of them frequently creates a susceptibility of impression, and a premature warmth of tender emotions, which, not to speak of other possible effects, have been known to betray young women into a sudden attachment to persons unworthy of their affection, and thus to hurry them into marriages terminating in unhappiness.

In addition to the regular habit of useful reading, the custom of committing to the memory select and ample portions of poetic compositions, not for the purpose of ostentatiously quoting them in mixed company, but for the sake of private improvement, deserves in consequence of its beneficial tendency to be mentioned with a very high degree of praise. The mind is thus stored with a lasting treasure of sentiments and ideas, combined by writers of transcendent genius and vigorous imagination; clothed in appropriate, nervous, and glowing language; and impressed by the powers of cadence and harmony. Let the poetry, however, be well chosen. Let it be such as elevates the heart with the ardour of devotion: adds energy and grace to precepts of morality; kindles benevolence by pathetic narrative and reflection; enters with accurate and lively description into the varieties of character; or presents vivid pictures of the grand and beautiful features which characterise the scenery of nature. Such are, in general, the works of Milton, of Thomson, of Gray, of Mason, of Beattie, and of Cowper. It is thus that the beauty and grandeur of nature will be contemplated with new pleasure. It is thus that taste will be called forth, exercised, and corrected. It is thus that judgement will be strengthened, virtuous emotions cherished, piety animated and exalted. At all times, and under every circumstance, the heart, penetrated with religion, will delight itself in the recollection of passages, which



display the perfections of that Being on whom it trusts, and the glorious hopes to the accomplishment of which it humbly looks forward. When affliction weighs down the spirits, or sickness the strength ; it is then that the cheering influence of that recollection will be doubly felt. When old age, disabling the sufferer from the frequent use of books, obliges the mind to turn inward upon itself ; the memory, long retentive, even in its decay, of the acquisitions which it had attained and valued in its early vigour, still suggests the lines which have again and again diffused rapture through the bosom of health, and are yet capable of overspreading the hours of decrepitude and the couch of pain with consolation. If these benefits, these comforts, flow from recollected compositions of man : how much greater may be expected from portions of the word of God deeply imprinted on the mind ?

But it is not from books alone that a considerate young woman is to seek her improvement and her gratifications. The discharge of relative duties, and the exercise of benevolence, form additional sources of activity and enjoyment. To give delight in the affectionate intercourse of domestic society ; to relieve a parent in the superintendence of family affairs ; to smooth the bed of sickness, and cheer the decline of age ; to examine into the wants and distresses of the female inhabitants of the neighbourhood ; to promote useful institutions for the comfort of mothers, and for the instruction of children ; and to give to those institutions that degree of attention, which, without requiring either much time or much personal trouble, will facilitate their establishment and extend their usefulness ; these are employments congenial to female sympathy ; employments in the precise line of female duty ; employments which, so far as the lot of human life allows, confer genuine and lasting kindnesses on those whom they are designed to benefit, and never fail, when pursued from conscientious motives, to meliorate the heart of her who is engaged in them.

In pointing out that which ought to be done, let justice be rendered to that which has been done. In the discharge of the domestic offices of kindness, and in the exercise of charitable and friendly regard to the neighbouring poor, women in general are exemplary. In the latter branch of Christian virtue, an accession of energy has been witnessed within a few years. Many ladies have shewn, and still continue to shew, their earnest solicitude for the welfare of the wretched and the ignorant, by spontaneously establishing schools of industry and of religious instruction: and with a still more beneficial warmth of benevolence, have taken the regular inspection of them upon themselves. May they stedfastly persevere, and be imitated by numbers!

Among the employments of time which, though regarded with due attention by many young women, are more or less neglected by a considerable proportion, moderate exercise in the open air claims to be noticed. Sedentary confinement in hot apartments on the one hand, and public diversions frequented on the other, in buildings still more crowded and stifling, are often permitted so to occupy the time as by degrees even to wear away the relish for the freshness of a pure atmosphere, for the beauties and amusements of the garden, and for those "rural sights and rural sounds," which delight the mind unsubdued by idleness, folly, or vice. Enfeebled health, a capricious temper, low and irritable spirits, and the loss of many pure and continually recurring enjoyments, are among the consequences of such misconduct.

But though books obtain their reasonable portion of the day, though health has been consulted, though the immediate demands of duty have been fulfilled, and the dictates of benevolence obeyed, there will yet be hours remaining unoccupied; hours for which no specific employment has yet been provided. For such hours it is not the intention of these pages to prescribe any specific employment. What if

some space be assigned to the useful and elegant arts of female industry? But is industry to possess them all? Let the innocent amusements which home furnishes claim their share. It is a claim which shall cheerfully be allowed. Do innocent amusements abroad offer their pretensions? Neither shall they on proper occasions be unheard. A well-regulated life will never know a vacuum sufficient to require a large share of amusements to be sought abroad to fill it.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### CONSIDERATIONS ANTECEDENT TO MARRIAGE.

IN the preceding pages, which have had an evident and primary reference to the situation of unmarried women, I have been under the necessity of speaking largely concerning various duties which appertain equally to those who are no longer single. I have to entreat the reader, if of the latter description, still to regard the foregoing part of this treatise as addressed also to herself: if of the former, to believe herself, even at present, concerned in many of the subsequent observations, though they should seem to refer solely to a condition of life into which she has not yet entered.

It will be proper, however, before the duties of a married woman are particularised, to be explicit concerning some points, on attention to which the probability of happiness in matrimonial life radically depends.

The prospect of passing a single month with an acquaintance, whose society we know to be unpleasing, is a prospect from which every mind recoils. Were the time of intercourse antecedently fixed to extend to a year, or to a longer

period, our repugnance would be proportionally great. Were the term to reach to the death of one of the parties, the evil would appear in foresight scarcely to be endured. But farther; let it be supposed, not only that the parties were to be bound during their joint lives to the society of each other; but that in all circumstances their interests were to be inseparably blended together. And, in the next place, let it also be supposed that the two parties were not to engage in this association on terms of complete equality: but that one of them was necessarily to be placed as to various particulars, in a state of subordination to the other. What caution would be requisite in each of the parties, what especial caution would be requisite in the party destined to subordination, antecedently to such an engagement! How diversified, how strict, how persevering should be the enquiries of each respecting the other; and especially of the latter respecting the former? Unless the dispositions, the temper, the habits, the genuine character, and inmost principles were mutually known; what rational hope, what tolerable chance of happiness could subsist? And if happiness should not be the lot of the two associates, would not their disquietudes be proportionate to the closeness of their union? Let this reasoning be transferred to the case of marriage.

Whether marriage establishes between the husband and the wife a perfect equality of rights, or conveys to the former a certain degree of superiority over the latter, is a point not left among Christians to be decided by speculative arguments. The intimation of the divine will, communicated to the first woman immediately after the fall, is corroborated by various injunctions delivered in the New Testament. "Let the wife see that she reverence her husband."—"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord; for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church;—therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own

“husbands in every thing (q).” The command in the second of these passages is so explicit, and illustrated by a comparison so impressive, that it is needless to recite other texts of a similar import. The obedience, however, which is here enjoined by the Apostle, is not unlimited obedience. Were a husband presumptuously to require his wife to infringe the property or other rights of a third person, or to transgress any other of the divine laws; she would be bound to obey God rather than man. And it is very possible that he might be in other respects so unreasonable and injurious in his injunctions, that she might with justice conceive herself exempted, as to those particular instances, from the obligation of implicit submission to his authority. St. Paul directs children to obey their parents, and servants their masters, “in *all* things (r).” Yet it is manifest that his direction was not intended to reach to things sinful; nor perhaps to other extreme cases which might be devised. It is reasonable, therefore, and it is also conformable to the general mode of conveying moral directions which is adopted in the Scriptures, to understand his strong declaration concerning the authority of a husband as limited by restrictions and exceptions, corresponding to those with which his equally strong declarations concerning the authority of parents and of masters are manifestly to be understood. But though in cases such as have been supposed the duty of female obedience is suspended; it is suspended in these only. She who is commanded to “be subject to her head, the husband, as the church is subject to Christ, its head,” cannot reasonably doubt that under all other circumstances faithful and willing obedience is a branch of her connubial duty.

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(q) Ephes. v. 33 — 22. 24.—See also Coloss. iii. 18 — 1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35.—1 Tim. ii. 11, 15.—Titus, ii. 5.—1 Peter, iii. 1.

(r) Coloss. iii. 20, 22.



A branch of duty in its nature so important and so extensive, ought to be considered antecedently to marriage with religious scrupulousness. And while the obligation is acknowledged, let not the ends for which it is imposed be misconceived. Let not pride or ignorance be for a moment permitted to suggest that the Father of the universe, in allotting obedience to the wife, has displayed a partial regard to the welfare and comfort of the husband. Eternal wisdom, incapable of error and of caprice, has in this dispensation consulted her happiness no less than that of her associate. You admit that it was desirable to prevent or to lessen the bickerings, the conflicts, the pertinacious contrariety of plans and projects, which, in a state imperfect and sinful as human nature is, would perpetually arise and involve families in unceasing confusion, were each party free from any obligation to acquiesce in the decision of the other. By what method then, were we to consult the dictates of unbiassed judgement, should we deem the object most likely to be attained? Undoubtedly by the method which Providence has adopted; by assigning to one of the partners in marriage a fixed pre-eminence over the other. If this point be once conceded, there cannot be room for much hesitation as to the only remaining question: to which of the two parties would it be wisest and best that the pre-eminence should be assigned? It is on man that the burden of the most laborious offices in life, of those offices which require the greatest exertions, the deepest reflection, and the most comprehensive judgement, is devolved. Man, that he may be qualified for the discharge of these offices, has been furnished by his Creator with powers of investigation and of foresight in a somewhat larger measure than the other sex, who have been recompensed by an ample share of mental endowments of a different kind. It seems therefore an appointment both reasonable in its nature, and most conducive to the happiness, not only of the man



himself, but of his wife, of his children, and of all his connections, that he should be the person to whom the superiority should be committed. But Heaven has not left the wife destitute or neglected. Security is provided for her in various ways against an arbitrary and tyrannical exercise of power on the part of the husband. Some limitations to which his authority is subjected have already been noticed. These, if he deserve the name of a Christian, he well knows. He knows too, that if he be intrusted with power, he acts under a proportionate responsibility ; that he acts under the all-seeing eye of his future Judge. And if the Scriptures are on the one hand express in enjoining obedience on the wife ; they are no less explicit on the other in reminding the husband of the mildness, the conciliating forbearance, the lively and never-failing tenderness of affection, which every branch of his behaviour towards his partner ought to display ; and of the readiness with which he ought to make large sacrifices of personal inclination, ease, and interest, when essential to her permanent welfare. “Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them (*s*).” “Ye husbands, dwell with your wives according to knowledge : giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel (*t*).” “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it (*u*).” If a woman marry a person without having sufficient reason to be satisfied, from actual knowledge of his character, that the commands of the Scriptures will decide his general conduct ; her subsequent unhappiness must fairly be attributed to herself.

The foundation of the greater portion of the unhappiness which clouds matrimonial life, is to be sought in the unconcern so prevalent in the world as to those radical principles

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(*s*) Coloss. iii. 19. (*t*) 1 Pet. iii. 7. (*u*) Ephes. v. 25.

on which character and the permanence of character depend,—the principles of religion. Popular language indicates the state of popular opinion. If an union about to take place, or recently contracted, between two young persons, be mentioned in conversation; the first question which we hear asked concerning it is, whether it be *a good match*. The very countenance and voice of the inquirer, and of the answerer, the terms of the answer returned, and the observations, whether expressive of satisfaction or of regret, which fall from the lips of the company present in the circle, all concur to shew what, in common estimation, is meant by being well married. If a young woman be described as thus married, the terms imply, that she is united to a man whose station and fortune are such, when compared with her own or those of her parents, that in point of precedence, in point of command of finery and of money, she is, more or less, a gainer by the bargain. In high life they imply, that she will now possess the enviable advantages of taking place of other ladies in the neighbourhood; of decking herself out with jewels and lace; of inhabiting splendid apartments; rolling in handsome carriages; gazing on numerous servants in gaudy liveries; and of repairing to London, and other fashionable scenes of resort, all in a degree somewhat higher than that in which a calculating broker, after poring on her pedigree, summing up her property in hand, and computing, at the market price, every item which is contingent or in reversion, would have pronounced her entitled to them. A few slight and obvious alterations would adapt the picture to the middle classes of society. But what do the terms imply as to the character of the man selected to be her husband? Probably nothing. His character is a matter which seldom enters into the consideration of the persons who use them; unless it, at length, appears in the shape of an after-thought, or is awkwardly hitched into their remarks for the sake of

decorum. If the terms imply any thing on this point, they mean no more than that he is not notoriously and scandalously addicted to vice. He may be covetous, he may be proud, he may be ambitious, he may be malignant, he may be devoid of Christian principles, practice, and belief; or, to say the very least, it may be totally unknown whether he does not fall, in every particular, under this description; and yet, in the language and in the opinion of the generality of both sexes, the match is excellent. In the same manner a diminution of power as to the supposed advantages already enumerated, though counterpoised by the acquisition of a companion eminent for his virtues, is supposed to constitute a bad match; and is universally lamented in polite meetings with real or affected concern. The good or bad fortune of a young man in the choice of a wife is estimated according to the same rules.

From those who contract marriages, either chiefly, or in a considerable degree, through motives of interest or of ambition, it would be folly to expect previous solicitude respecting piety of heart. And it would equally be folly to expect that such marriages, however they may answer the purposes of interest or of ambition, should terminate otherwise than in wretchedness. Wealth may be secured; rank may be obtained: but if wealth and rank are to be main ingredients in the cup of matrimonial felicity, the pure and sweet wine will be exhausted at once, and nothing remain but bitter and corrosive dregs. When attachments are free from the contamination of such unworthy motives, it by no means always follows that much attention is paid to intrinsic excellence of moral and religious character. Affection, quick-sighted in discerning, and diligent in scrutinising, the minutest circumstances, which contribute to shew whether it is met with reciprocal sincerity and ardour, is, in other respects, purblind and inconsiderate. It magnifies good qualities which exist; it seems to itself to perceive

merits which, to other eyes, are invisible ; it gives credit for all that it wishes to discover ; it inquires not, where it fears a disappointment. It forgets that the spirit of the scriptural command “ not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers,” a command reiterated in other parts of Holy Writ, may justly be deemed to extend to all cases, in which there is reason to apprehend that religion is not the great operative principle in the mind of the man. Yet on what grounds can a woman hope for the blessing of God on a marriage contracted without regard to his injunctions ? What security can she have for happiness, as depending on the conduct of her husband ; if the only foundation, on which confidence can be safely reposed, be wanting ? And ought she not, in common prudence, to consider it as wanting, until she is thoroughly convinced of its existence ? He whose ruling principle is that of stedfast obedience to the laws of God, has a pledge to give, and it is a pledge worthy of being trusted, that he will discharge his duty to his fellow-creatures, according to the different relations in which he may be placed. Every other bond of confidence is brittle as a thread, and looks specious only to prove delusive. A woman who receives for her husband a person of whose moral and religious character she knows no more than that it is outwardly decent, stakes her welfare upon a very hazardous experiment. She who marries a man not entitled even to that humble praise, in the hope of reclaiming him, stakes it on an experiment in which there is scarcely a chance of her success.

Among various absurd and mischievous lessons which young women were accustomed in the last age to learn from dramatic representations, one of the most absurd and mischievous was this : that a man of vicious character was very easily reformed ; and that he was particularly likely, when once reformed, to make a desirable and exemplary husband. At the conclusion of almost every comedy the

hero of the piece, signalized throughout its progress by qualities and conduct radically incompatible with the existence of matrimonial happiness, was introduced upon the stage as having experienced a sudden change of heart, and become a convert, as by a miracle, to the ways of virtue and religion. The same preposterous reformation occasionally finds a place in compositions of modern date. The reasons which have induced many writers, by no means unskilled in the science of human nature, to construct their dramas on a plan so unnatural, are evident. Following the bent of a polluted mind, or solicitous only to suit the taste of a corrupted audience, the author conceived immorality seasoned with wit to furnish the most copious and attractive fund of entertainment. He formed his plot, drew his characters, and arranged his incidents, accordingly. His catastrophe was to turn on the usual hinge, marriage. But though he had, without scruple, exhibited his hero through four entire acts, and three quarters of the fifth, as unprincipled; yet in the final scene to unite him, unprincipled as he was, to the lady of his wishes, a lady whom it had been found convenient to represent throughout the drama in a much more respectable light than her intended husband, was an indecorum too flagrant to be hazarded. For form's sake, therefore, it was necessary that a reformation, and through want of time that an instantaneous reformation, should be supposed to be wrought in his heart. Let the female sex be assured, that whenever on the stage of real life an irreligious and immoral young man is suddenly found, on the eve of matrimony, to change his external conduct, and to recommend himself by professions of a determination to amend; the probability that the change is adopted, as in the theatre, for the sake of form and convenience, and that it will not be durable after the purposes of form and convenience shall have been an-



swered by it, is one of those which approach the nearest to certainty.

The truths which have been inculcated as furnishing the only foundation for rational hopes of happiness in marriage are such as ought to be established in the mind, while the affections are yet unengaged. When the heart has received an impression, reason acts feebly or treacherously. But let not the recent impression be permitted to sink deeper, ere the habitual principles and conduct of him who has made it shall have been ascertained. On these points in particular, points which a young woman cannot herself possess adequate means of investigating, let the advice and inquiries of virtuous relatives be solicited. Let not their opinions, though the purport of them should prove unacceptable, be undervalued; nor their remonstrances, if they should remonstrate, be construed as unkindness. Let it be remembered that, although parental authority can never be justified in constraining a daughter to marry against her will; there are many cases in which it may with reason refuse its assent to her wishes, and few in which it may not be justified in requiring her to pause. Let it be remembered that, if she should unite herself to a man who is not under the habitual influence of Christianity, but unsettled as to its principles, or careless as to some of its practical duties; she has to dread not only the risk of personal unhappiness from his conduct towards her, but the dangerous contagion of intimate example. She has to dread that his irreligion may infect herself, his unsteadiness may render her unsteady, his carelessness may teach her to be careless. Does the scene appear in prospect gloomy or ambiguous? Let her be wise, let her exert herself, before it be too late. It is better to encounter present anxiety than to avoid it at the expence of greater, of durable evils. And even if affection has already acquired such force, as not to be repressed without very



painful struggles : let her be consoled and animated by the consciousness that the sacrifice is to prevent, while prevention is yet in her power, years of danger and of misery ; that it is an act not only of ultimate kindness to herself, but of duty to God ; and that every act of humble and persevering duty may hope, through a Redeemer, to receive, in a better world, a reward proportionate to the severity of the trial.

In a union so intimate as that of matrimonial life, those diversities in temper, habits, and inclinations, which in a less close connection might not have been distinctly perceived, or would have attracted notice but seldom, unavoidably swell into importance. Hence, among the qualifications which influence the probability of connubial comfort, a general similarity of disposition between the two parties is one of especial moment. Where strong affection prevails, a spirit of accommodation will prevail also. But it is not desirable that the spirit of accommodation should be subjected to rigorous or very frequent experiments. Great disparity in age between a husband and a wife, or a wide difference in rank antecedently to marriage is, on this account, liable to be productive of disquietude. The sprightliness of youth seems levity, and the sobriety of maturer years to be tinctured with moroseness, when closely contrasted. A sudden introduction to affluence, a sudden and great elevation in the scale of society, is apt to intoxicate ; and a sudden reduction in outward appearance to be felt as degrading. Instances, however, are not very rare in which the force of affection, of good sense, and of good principles, shews itself permanently superior to the influence of causes, which to minds less happily attempered, and less under the guidance of religious motives, prove sources of anxiety and vexation.

To delude a young man by encouraging his attentions for the pleasure of exhibiting him as a conquest, for the purpose of exciting the assiduities of another person, or from any

motive except the impulse of reciprocal regard, is a proceeding too plainly repugnant to justice, and to delicacy of sentiment, to require much observation. On such subjects, even inadvertence is highly culpable. What, then, is the guilt of her, who deliberately raises hopes which she is resolved not to fulfil?

There remains yet another caution relating to the present subject, which appears worthy of being suggested. A young woman, unbiassed by interesting motives is sometimes led to contract a matrimonial engagement without suspecting that she perhaps does not entertain for her intended husband the warm and rooted affection necessary for the conservation of connubial happiness. She beholds him with general approbation: she is conscious that there is no other person whom she prefers to him; she receives lively pleasure from his attentions; and she imagines that she loves him with tenderness and ardour. Yet it is very possible that she may be unacquainted with the real state of her heart. Thoughtless inexperience, gentleness of disposition, the quick susceptibility of early youth, and chiefly perhaps the complacency which all persons, whose affections are not pre-occupied, feel towards those who distinguish them by particular proofs of regard, may have excited an indistinct partiality which she mistakes for rivetted attachment. Many an unhappy wife has discovered the mistake too late.

It is highly desirable that a young woman, as soon as ever she receives particular attentions from an individual of the other sex, should communicate with perfect openness the circumstance to her parents. And every young woman ought habitually to reflect, that her first object should not be to be settled in matrimonial life; but to be prepared to do her duty in any situation, in which Providence may design her to be placed.

## CHAPTER XII.

## ON THE DUTIES OF MATRIMONIAL LIFE.

AMONG the most important of the duties peculiar to the situation of a married woman, are to be ranked those arising from the influence which she will naturally possess over the conduct and character of her husband. If it be scarcely possible for two persons connected by the ties of common friendship, to live constantly together, or even habitually to pass much time in the society of each other, without gradually approaching nearer and nearer in their sentiments and habits? still less probable is it, that from the closest and most attractive of all bands of union a similar effect should not be the result. The effect will be experienced by both parties, and perhaps in an equal degree. But if it be felt by one in a greater degree than by the other, it seems likely to be thus felt by the husband. In female manners inspired by affection, and bearing at once the stamp of modesty and of good sense, example operates with a captivating force which few bosoms can resist. When the heart is won, the judgement is easily persuaded. It waits not for the slow process of argument to prove that to be right, which it already thinks too amiable to be wrong. To the fascinating charms of female virtue, when adorned by its highest embellishment, diffidence, the Scriptures themselves bear testimony. St. Peter, addressing himself to married women, some of whom in those days had been converted to the Christian religion while their husbands remained yet in idolatry, speaks in the following terms: “ Likewise ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that if any obey not the word, they also, without the word, may be won by the conversation of the wives;

“ while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with “ fear (x).” To every woman who, in modern times, is unhappy enough to have a husband ignorant of the evidence, unconvinced of the truth, regardless of the precepts, or destitute of the genuine spirit of Christianity, this direction of the Apostle indicates an object which ought to be among the nearest to her heart ; and at the same time describes with an accurate insight into the nature of the human mind, the methods from which, under the superintending control of Providence, the attainment of it is to be expected. But it speaks to married women universally. To every one who discerns in the behaviour of her husband a habit of deviation, in any respect, from the path of Christian rectitude, it speaks the language of instruction and of encouragement. If the example of a wife endearing herself to her husband by “ chaste conversation,” by purity of manners and of conduct, “ coupled with fear,” united with modest respect and unassuming mildness, would be thus efficacious towards reclaiming a person immersed in the darkness and the immoralities of Paganism : shall it now be without power to detach him, who daily beholds it, from smaller errors ? Shall not the divine blessing, which heretofore enabled it to do so much, enable it now to do that which is less ? Its power is neither diminished, nor forsaken of the divine blessing. It labours in secrecy and silence, unobtrusive and unscen. But it is, at this hour, performing its part throughout every quarter of the Christian world, in weaning from prejudices, in dissuading from vice, in fixing the wavering, in softening the obdurate, in rendering virtue and holiness beloved, in extending the sphere of peace and happiness, and in preparing those on whom it operates for higher felicity hereafter. Women appear to be, on the

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(x) 1 Peter, iii. 1, 2.

whole, more disposed to religious considerations than men. They have minds more susceptible of lively impressions, which religion is pre-eminent in producing. They are less exposed than the other sex to the temptations of gross and open vice. They have quicker feelings of native delicacy, no inconsiderable supports to virtue. They are more easily excited to tenderness, benevolence, and sympathy. And they are subjected, in a peculiar degree, to vicissitudes of health adapted to awaken serious thought, and to set before them the prospect and the consequences of dissolution. The steady glow of piety excited in the mind of the wife has, in numberless instances, diffused itself through the breast of the husband. And in no instance has it diffused itself through his breast, without adding to the warmth of conjugal affection.

But never let it be forgotten that female example, if it be thus capable of befriending the cause of religion and the interests of moral rectitude, is equally capable of proving itself one of the most dangerous of their foes. We are all prone to copy a model, though a faulty model, which is continually before us. When the persons by whom it is exhibited are indifferent to us, we yet conform to it imperceptibly ; when they are esteemed and loved, we are ensnared into imitation even with open eyes. She who, at present, has no piety of heart, or so far mistakes the essence of Christian piety as to regard it as a matter but of secondary importance, knows not whether she shall not have to answer at the day of retribution for having betrayed her husband into a neglect of his eternal welfare. She who sets the pattern of slighting one Christian ordinance, of disobeying one Christian precept, contributes not only to lead her husband into the same sin, but likewise to weaken his attachment to every other Christian ordinance, and to impair the sense which he entertains, be it more or less strong, of the obligation and importance of the other precepts of the Gospel. If you are little capable



of being, in the most important points, a beneficial companion to your husband ; beware at least of being a noxious associate. If you are unable to forward his course in the path of virtue and religion ; at least beware that he be not impeded and misled by failings borrowed from yourself. Be not however disposed to conclude that your modest endeavours to promote his best interests are vain. " Be not weary in well-doing," nor despair. Persevere in your exertions, for your husband's sake as well as for your own. Unavailing as they have hitherto proved, at a future period they may be rendered by the blessing of Providence successful. Even now, unpromising as appearances may be, you may have sown seed which, under the fostering influence of reflection, of sickness, and of sorrow, may spring up and bear excellent fruit hereafter.

But, whatever be the influence which the amiable virtues of a wife may obtain over her husband ; let not the consciousness of it ever lead her to seek opportunities of displaying it, nor to cherish a wish to intrude into those departments which belong not to her jurisdiction. Content with the province which reason and revelation have assigned to her, and sedulous to fulfil, with cheerful alacrity, the duties which they prescribe ; let her equally guard against desiring to possess undue weight over her husband's conduct, and against exercising amiss that which properly belongs to her. Let her remember too that the just regard, which has been acquired by artless attractions, may be lost by unwarrantable and teasing competition.

The love of power, congenial to the human breast, reveals itself in the two sexes under different forms, but with equal force. Hence have arisen the open endeavours sometimes discernible on the part of wives of turbulent passions, and the oblique machinations visible among others of a cunning turn of mind, to carry favourite points against the will of their husbands. If we may give credit to the writers of



comedy, and to the weekly or diurnal editors of periodical papers, at the end of the last century and early in the present, for accurate observation and just description of the manners of their contemporaries; the grand resource, at that period, of a lady whose husband was cruel enough to deny her any thing on which she had set her heart, from a London Journey to a piece of brocade, was to fall into an hysteric. The reign of fits and vapours seems now to be closed. Let not the dispositions, by which it was introduced and upheld, be found to survive its fall. Let it ever be remembered, that she who by teasing, by wheedling, by finessc under any shape whatever, seeks to weary or to deceive her husband into consent or acquiescence, acts no less plainly in opposition to her duty of scriptural obedience, than she would have done had she driven him into compliance by the menaces and weapons of an Amazon.

“ I beseech you,” said St. Paul to his Ephesian converts, “ that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called; with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace (*y*).” This earnest and affectionate advice, though originally referring to the general condition and manner of life to which Christians are called, has a propriety singularly apposite when applied to the state of marriage. Let every married woman regard the admonition as though it had been pronounced by the Apostle specially for her sake.

To preserve unimpaired the affections of her associate, to convince him that, in his judgement of her character formed antecedently to marriage, he was neither blinded by partiality, nor deluded by artifice, will be the uniform study of every woman who consults her own happiness and the rules

of Christian duty. The strongest attachment will decline, if it suspect that it is received with diminished warmth. And the suspicion will present itself to the mind of a husband, who sees not in the behaviour of his wife a continuance of that solicitude to render herself pleasing to him, which he had experienced at the commencement of their union. The advice which has been publicly and seriously given, that a married woman should ever conceal with care from her husband the extent of her affection for him, is happily too absurd to gain many converts among women who really love those to whom they are united ; and too difficult to be frequently put in practice by wives of that description, should they blindly desire to follow it.

Next to the attractions of virtue, the qualification which contributes, perhaps, more than any other to cherish the tender feelings of regard, and to establish connubial happiness, is good temper. It is indeed itself a virtue. As far as it is the mere gift of nature, it is not in strictness entitled to that appellation. But as far as it results from conscientious cultivation and vigilance, it has a claim to the honourable distinction. Some minds are originally imbued with an ampler share of benevolence and kindness than has been infused into others. The difference is obvious, even in early childhood. Care however and exertion, founded on Christian motives, and strengthened by uniform habit, are able both to meliorate dispositions already excellent, and to overcome the greatest inherent defects. But if they on whom Providence, varying the sources of moral probation in different individuals, has bestowed sweetness of temper with a sparing hand, be not strenuous and unremitting in their efforts to improve, under the divine blessing, the scanty stock ; if, instead of considering a native failing as an intimation respecting the quarter on which it is their especial duty to be on their guard, they convert it into an apology for captiousness, peevishness, and violence : what but do-

mestic misery can be expected? A fretful woman is her own tormentor; but she is also a torment to every one around her, and to none so much as to her husband. No day, no hour is secure. No incident is so trifling, but it may be wrought up into a family disturbance. The Apostle's exclamation, "Behold, how great a matter a little fire *(z)*!" is in that house fully and continually exemplified. But the scene to which that exclamation is applicable, is not the school of conjugal affection. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, be put away." "It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman." "It is better to dwell in a corner of the house-top, than with a brawling woman in a wide house *(a)*."

To "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price," and possesses an intrinsic charm to which the breast of man can scarcely be insensible, let there be added Discretion. The value of this quality in promoting and upholding matrimonial happiness is inestimable. It is a quality which the Scriptures, as foreboding the frequent neglect of it, and the miserable consequences of that neglect, have not overlooked. St. Paul, in his Epistle to Titus, after having directed that young women should be instructed "to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children," enjoins farther that they should be taught "to be discreet *(b)*." Discretion is not one of those virtues which come into practice only in singular conjunctures, under circumstances which can happen seldom to the same individual, and to some persons may never occur at all. It is not a robe of state, to be drawn forth from its recess on some day of festivity; or a ponderous cloak, to be put on to repel the violence of a thunder-shower. It is that

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*(z)* James, iii. 5. *(a)* Ephes. iv. 31. Prov. xxi. 19. xxv. 24.

*(b)* Titus, ii. 5.

to the mind which the every day clothing is to the body ; requisite under every vicissitude to health, and propriety, and comfort. Its sphere embraces every season and every incident of life. At home and abroad, in the city and in the country, with intimates and with strangers, in business and in leisure, it is vigilant, and active, and unwearied. It enhances the utility of virtue, and anticipates the allurements of vice. It attends to persons (c) and feelings, to times, occasions, and situations ; and “ abstains from all appearance “ of evil (d).” It is worthy of being inculcated with the more earnestness on married women, because they appear, in several respects, to be in greater danger than the single of being led by custom, or hurried by inadvertence, into disregard of it. Marriage, though to a certain degree a state of restraint, is not unfrequently regarded as bestowing some desirable accessions of liberty. The giddy and the vain, secured by having already contracted an indissoluble engagement from the charge of being on the watch to obtain a settlement for life, and from the danger of preventing themselves from obtaining one, often indulge themselves without concern in a freedom of manners, and a levity of conversation, from which the fear of incurring censure and exciting disgust had previously taught them to refrain. Plunging with augmented eagerness into the tumults of dissipation, and little scrupulous as to the society with which they tread the circle of amusements ; they take fire at each remonstrance of a husband as a reflection on their character, and feel the smallest obstacle to the career of their pleasures as an act of tyrannical controul. Hence, while the wife, on

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(c) No advice could easily be more repugnant to discretion and common sense, than that which has been given to women, by at least one writer of eminence, studiously to seek their friendships among persons of the other sex.

(d) 1 Thes. v. 22.

the one hand, relies on the innocence of her intentions, and the husband, on the other, has not to charge himself with unkindness or austerity; the secret springs of disquietude and grief, perhaps of indifference, of alienation of heart, and of incurable dissensions, are already opened. Is the wife then innocent? Unquestionably not. Admit her giddiness and her vanity, no trifling subjects of reprehension, no light deviations from Christian sober-mindedness, to be deemed blameless. Admit her manners and her conversation to have been clear from every imputation, except that of thoughtless imprudence. A heavy charge will yet remain. She has wounded the feelings of her husband; she has exposed to risk the warmth of his affection; she has laid herself open to the insinuations of calumny; she has exhibited a dangerous example; she has trodden a most dangerous path; she has hazarded her own happiness, and that of the person most dear to her, by a neglect of Discretion. But the giddy and the vain are not the only married women who are found to be indiscreet in their manners and deportment. Some, whose feelings are not very refined, no longer take the pains to preserve their discourse and behaviour from being tinctured with the consequences of that native defect. They hesitate not to dwell in common conversation on acts of misconduct and guilt, from the contemplation of which a mind of innate modesty would instantly recoil. They behave to their acquaintance of the other sex with blunt and unrestrained familiarity. And they are even blind enough to allege the circumstance of their being no longer single as a sufficient reason for laying aside a guarded demeanour, and a delicacy which they are very willing to term fastidious, formal, and unnecessary. Some, whose perceptions of right and wrong are less deficient in purity, quickness, and strength, are misled by fashion and example, or by an eagerness to evince themselves of a frank and open disposition, into less prominent



instances of the same errors. To observe the medium between opposite failings is one of the most difficult exertions of good sense. The stiffness, the proud and artificial reserve, which in former ages infected even the intercourse of private life, are happily discarded. It is possible, however, that modern manners may have in some respects a tendency to the contrary extreme. At all events, modest propriety is not stiffness. Nor will that portion of reserve which belongs to diffident sensibility appear proud and artificial in the eye of any persons, except of those who desire to promote unwarrantable freedom, or who are ignorant how greatly decorum of manners contributes to secure rectitude of conduct. Odious as formality is, it were far better even to be deemed somewhat formal, than actually to be indiscreet. To imagine that marriage, a state which imposes new duties upon you, which renders the happiness of another person as well as your own dependent on your actions, should diminish the obligations to prudence, should lessen the duty and the value of female delicacy and reserve, is an opinion as obviously groundless as it is pernicious. What can more keenly wound the bosom of a husband, what can be more likely to deaden his affections, than to perceive his wife daily paying less and less regard to qualities, which were among those that antecedently to marriage endeared her to him the most?

By writers, who have suggested many excellent rules of duty, and many useful admonitions to the female sex, it has been recommended to women studiously to refrain from discovering to their partners in marriage the full extent of their abilities and attainments. And on what grounds has the concealment been recommended? It has been recommended as a probable method of inducing the husband to give the wife credit for greater talents and knowledge than she possesses. This is not discretion, but art. It is dissimulation; it is deliberate imposition. It is a fraud, however,



to which happily there is no great encouragement. It could scarcely be practised long without detection. And it could not be detected without exciting in the breast of the deluded party, such a degree of disgust at the deceitfulness of his associate, as would overwhelm her with shame and remorse, if she retained a spark of ingenuousness, of virtue, of affection. There is yet another motive on which the same advice has been founded. Men, it is said, are not partial to women of strong understandings. Jealous of that pre-eminence which they claim in depth of research and solidity of judgement, they bear not in any female, and least of all in a wife, the most distant appearance of rivalship. Admit for a moment the observation to be well founded. Is folly to be pretended, because sense may displease? Because a man is absurd, is a woman to be a hypocrite? The observation, however, taken in the unqualified acceptance in which it is commonly alleged, cannot by any means be supported. That it may be practicable to shew instances of men, who are themselves so deficient either in understanding or in rational consideration, as to feel mortified by those proofs of unaffected intelligence in a wife, which ought to have placed her higher in their esteem, I acknowledge. For there is not perhaps any species of weakness, of thoughtlessness, or of pride, of which examples may not be discovered. In such cases discretion, while with Christian circumspection it shuns deceit, will guard against giving unnecessary offence. But in general it is not the sense that offends. It is some quality or some disposition by which the sense is accompanied. It is some quality or disposition which has no proper connection with that sense. It is one which that sense ought to be employed in eradicating. It is one which, if it continue to adhere to that sense, adheres by the fault of the individual herself. If, conformably to the example heretofore exhibited in polite life at Paris, a real or supposed eminence in intellectual endowments were generally to

in flame a lady with a propensity to erect herself into an idol for the votaries of science and taste to worship : were it to fill her with ambition to give audience to a levee of deistical philosophers ; to see her toilet surrounded with wits and wiflings ; to pronounce to the listening circle her decision on a manuscript sonnet ; and to appreciate the versification and the point of the last new epigram which aspired to divert the town : it would neither have been denied nor regretted that a female so qualified would, in this country, be deemed one of the least eligible of wives. Such females, however, are phenomena rarely seen in the meridian of Great Britain. Farther ; if strength of understanding in a woman be the source of pride and self-sufficiency ; if it render her manners over-bearing, her temper irritable, her prejudices obstinate ; we are not to wonder that its effects are formidable to the other sex, and especially to him by whom they are with most frequency to be endured. But is arrogance, is impatience of contradiction, is reluctance to discern and acknowledge error, the necessary or the usual fruit of strong sense in the female mind ? Assuredly not. In the mind where sense produces that fruit, something far more valuable than a powerful understanding is wanting. Let talents be graced with simplicity, with good humour, and with feminine modesty ; and there will seldom be found a husband whose heart they will not warm with delight.

But if a fund of good sense, larger than is commonly the lot of an individual, be allowed not to be unacceptable in a wife ; yet wit, we are told, is a qualification which almost every husband disapproves in his partner. In this instance, as well as in that which has recently been considered, common opinion appears not to render complete justice to men. If wit be continually exercised in ridicule and satire, if it nourish an anxiety to shine in conversation ; if it stimulate the possessor to aim at the manners and reputation of the character, expressed by the phrase, “ a woman of spirit ;” if

it indispose her to retirement, to improving pursuits, and to the pleasures of calm and unaffected discourse : is it wonderful that the husband should regret that it has been granted to his associate ? Yet it is not the wit that he dislikes, but the abuse of it ; the vanity, the ambition, the forward demeanor, and the sarcastic spirit by which it is accompanied. Let the wit be divested of these casual appendages ; let it be characterised by gentleness and modesty : let it be exhibited only in the playful sallies of good nature ; and she who is endowed with it will commonly find, that it holds in her husband's esteem a due place among the attractions by which she is endeared to him. But it is not to be concealed, that among women, no less than in the other sex, there are individuals who deem themselves possessed of this attraction, when in fact they have it not. If that which a wife conceives to be wit ought to bear the name of flippancy or of pertness ; her husband may be pardoned, though it should not fill him with rapture. If the dread of her breaking forth, in company, into a rattle of nonsense and affectation keep him perpetually sitting on thorns ; he may be pardoned, though he should wish that his wife had limited her desire of mental attainments to the region of common sense.

There is indeed an apprehension which is not unfrequently seen to obtrude itself on the minds of men, when speculating on the question, whether it be desirable to be united to a woman of extraordinary abilities and acquisitions ; and is the more worthy of notice, as experience has sometimes proved it to be just. While the heart is yet unoccupied, caution, looking to the sphere of domestic œconomy, draws a formidable picture of a learned and philosophic wife. It represents her as one, from whom due attention to household affairs will be expected in vain. It pictures her as immersed in her closet, and secluded in abstraction ; or sallying forth from her books only to engage in literary

disquisitions, and to stun her wearied mate with sonorous periods and cumbrous terms of science. It asks what ground there is for hoping that she will descend from mental elevation to the concerns of common life, and the vulgar details of family management; or that she will be capable of administering affairs which she has never studied, and must assuredly despise? That women may addict themselves to solitude and study, until they contract habits and a turn of mind which unfit them for the sphere of matrimonial life, is not to be denied. The number however of ladies of this description does not appear likely to swell to such an excess, as to alarm the other sex with the prospect of greatly narrowing the circle from which partners for the connubial state are to be selected. It must also be admitted, that the more profound researches of philosophy and learning are not the pursuits most improving to the female mind, and most congenial to its natural occupations. But if we speak of intelligent and well-informed women in general, of women, who, without becoming absorbed in the depths of erudition, and losing all esteem and all relish for social duties, are distinguished by a cultivated understanding, a polished taste, and a memory stored with useful and elegant information; there appears no reason to dread from the possession of these endowments a neglect of the duties of the mistress of a family.

To superintend the various branches of domestic management, or, as St. Paul briefly and emphatically expresses the same office, "to guide the house (e)," is the indispensable duty of a married woman. No mental endowments furnish an exemption from it; no plea of improving pursuits and literary pleasures can excuse the neglect of it. The task must be executed either by the master or the mistress of

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(e) 1 Tim. v. 14.

the house: and reason and scripture concur in assigning it unequivocally to the latter. Custom also, which in many instances presumes to decide in plain contradiction to these sovereign rules of life, has, in this point, so generally conformed to their determination; that a husband who should personally direct the proceedings of the housekeeper and the cook, and intrude into the petty arrangements of daily œconomy, would appear in all eyes, except his own, nearly as ridiculous as if he were to assume to himself the habiliments of his wife, or to occupy his mornings with her needles and work-bags. It is true nevertheless, that, in executing this office, a wife is to consult the wishes of her husband; and in proportion to the magnitude of any particular points, to act the more studiously according to his ideas rather than her own. The duty of obedience on her part extends to the province of guiding the house, no less than to the other branches of her conduct.

Are you then the mistress of a family? Fulfil the charge for which you are responsible. Attempt not to transfer your proper occupation to a favourite maid, however tried may be her fidelity and her skill. To confide implicitly in servants, is the way to render them undeserving of confidence. If they be already negligent or dishonest; your remissness encourages their faults, while it continues your own loss and inconvenience. If their integrity be unsullied, they are ignorant of the principles by which your expences ought to be regulated; and will act for you on other principles, which, if you were apprised of them, you ought to disapprove. They know not the amount of your husband's income, nor of his debts, nor of his other incumbrances; nor, if they knew all these things, could they judge what part of his revenue may reasonably be expended in the departments with which they are concerned. They will not reflect that small degrees of waste and extravagance, when it would be easy to guard against them, are criminal; nor will they suspect the magnitude of the sum to



which small degrees of waste and extravagance, frequently repeated, will accumulate in the course of the year. They will consider the credit of your character as intrusted to them ; and will conceive, that they uphold it by profusion. The larger your family is, the greater will be the annual portion of your expenditure, which by these means, will be thrown away. And if your ample fortune incline you to regard the sum as scarcely worth the little trouble which would have been required to prevent the loss ; consider the extent of good which it might have accomplished, had it been employed in feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. Be regular in requiring, and punctual in examining, your weekly accounts. Be frugal without parsimony ; save, that you may distribute. Study the comfort of all under your roof, even of the humblest inhabitant of the kitchen. Pinch not the inferior part of the family to provide against the cost of a day of splendour. Consider the welfare of the servants of your own sex as particularly committed to you. Encourage them in religion, and be active in furnishing them with the means of instruction. Let their number be fully adequate to the work which they have to perform ; but let it not be swelled either from a love of parade or from blind indulgence, to an extent which is needless. In those ranks of life where the mind is not accustomed to continued reflection, idleness is a never-failing source of folly and of vice. Forget not to indulge them at fit seasons with visits to their friends ; nor grudge the pains of contriving opportunities for the indulgence. Let not one tyrannise over another. In hearing complaints, be patient ; in inquiring into faults, be candid ; in reproving, be temperate and unruffled. Let not your kindness to the meritorious terminate when they leave your house ; but reward good conduct in them, and encourage it in others, by subsequent acts of benevolence adapted to their circumstances. Let it be your resolution, when called upon to describe the characters of



servants who have quitted your family, to act conscientiously towards all the parties interested, neither aggravating nor disguising the truth. And never let any one of those whose qualifications are to be mentioned, nor of those who apply for the account, find you seduced from your purpose by partiality or by resentment.

There is sometimes seen in families an inmate, commonly a female relation of the master or of the mistress of the house, who, though admitted to live in the parlour, is, in truth, an humble dependent, received either from motives of charity, or for the sake of being made useful in the conduct of domestic affairs, or of being a companion to her protectress when the latter is not otherwise engaged or amused. Have you such an inmate? Let your behaviour to her be such as she ought to experience. Pretend not to call her friend, while you treat her as a drudge. If sickness, or infirmity, or a sudden pressure of occupation, disqualify you from personally attending in detail to the customary affairs of your household; avail yourself of her assistance. But seek it not from an indolent aversion to trouble, nor from a haughty wish to rid yourself of the employment. While you have recourse to it, receive it as an act of kindness, not as the constrained obedience of an upper servant. Teach the inferior parts of your family to respect her, by respecting her yourself. Remember the awkwardness of her situation, and consult her comfort. Is she to look for friends in the kitchen, or in the housekeeper's room? You express surprise at the impropriety of this supposition. Is she to live an insulated being under your roof? Your benevolence revolts at the idea. Admit her then not merely to the formalities, but to the freedom and genuine satisfactions of intercourse. Tempt her not, by a reserved demeanour, perpetually reminding her of the obligations which she is unfortunate enough to owe you, to echo your opinions, to crouch to your humours, to act the part of a dissembler. If servile assiduities and fawn-

ing compliances be the means by which she is to ingratiate herself, blush for your proud and unfeeling heart. Is it the part of friendship, of liberal protection, to harass her with difficulties, to ensnare her sincerity, to establish her in the petty arts of cunning and adulation? Rather dismiss her with some pittance, however small, of bounty to search in obscurity for an honest maintenance, than retain her to learn hypocrisy, and to teach you arrogance, to be corrupted and to corrupt.

In all the domestic expences which are wholly, or in part, regulated by your opinion, beware that, while you pay a decent regard to your husband's rank in society, you are not hurried into ostentation and prodigality by vanity lurking in your breast. Examine your own motives to the bottom. Do you feel an inward sensation of uneasiness when one of your neighbours is reported to maintain a table more elegant than your own, to surpass you in the number of servants, or in the costliness of their liveries? Do you feel solicitous for an additional carriage on hearing that the equipage of an acquaintance has recently been enlarged? Are you eager to new-model or to decorate a room afresh, when neither use nor propriety demands the alteration, because a similar step has been adopted in a mansion in your vicinity? Do you discard handsome furniture before it has rendered half the service of which it was capable, because some frivolous lady can no longer bear the sight of the chairs and the window-curtains which have remained two or three tedious years in her drawing-room? Then your professions of being only desirous to do that which is requisite in your station are mere pretences to deceive others, or proofs that you are ignorant of yourself. You are lavish, vain, proud, emulous, ambitious; you are defective in some of the first duties of a wife and of a Christian. Instead of squandering in extravagance and parade, that property which ought partly to have been reserved in store for the future benefit of your

offspring, and partly to have been liberally bestowed for the present advantage of those whom relationship or personal merit, or the general claim which distress has upon such as are capable of granting relief, entitles to your bounty ; let it be your constant aim to obey the scriptural precepts of sobriety and moderation ; of moderation which is to be so prominent as to be known unto all men. Let it be your delight to fulfil every office of unaffected benevolence. Picture to yourself the difficulties, the calamities, the final ruin, in which tradesmen, with their wives and children, are frequently involved, even by the delay of payments due to them from families to which they have not dared to refuse credit. Subject not yourself in the sight of God to the charge of being accessory to such miseries. Guard by every becoming method of amiable representation and persuasion, if circumstances should make them necessary, and there is a prospect of their being taken in good part, the man to whom you are united from contributing to such miseries either by profusion or by inadvertence. Is he careless as to the inspection of his affairs ? Endeavour to open his eyes to the dangers of neglect and procrastination. Does he anticipate future, perhaps contingent, resources ? Gently awaken him to a conviction of his criminal imprudence. Encourage him, if he stand in need of encouragement, in vigilant but not avaricious foresight ; in the practice of enlarged and unwearyed charity. If your husband, accustomed to acquire money by professional exertions, should become too little inclined to impart freely that which he has laboriously earned ; suggest to him that one of the inducements to labour, addressed to him by an Apostle, is no other than this, “ that he may have to give to them that needeth (*f*).” If his extensive intercourse with the world, familiarising him

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(*f*) Ephes. iv. 28.

to instances of merited or of pretended distress, have the effect of rendering him somewhat too suspicious of deceit, somewhat too severe towards those whose misfortunes are, in part at least, to be ascribed to themselves ; remind him that "God is kind to the unthankful and the evil (g)." Remind him that the gift which conscience may require to be withheld from the unworthy, ought to be dedicated to the relief of indigent desert. Win him constantly and practically to "remember the words of the Lord Jesus ; how he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive (h)."

Women, who have been raised by marriage to the possession of rank and opulence unknown to them before, are frequently the most ostentatious in their proceedings. Yet a moderate share of penetration might have taught them to read, in the example of others, the ill success of their own schemes to gain respect by displaying their elevation. All such attempts sharpen the discernment and quicken the researches of envy ; and draw from obscurity into public notice the circumstances, which pride and pomp are labouring to bury in oblivion.

The want of the sedateness of character, which Christianity requires in all women, is in a married woman doubly reprehensible. If, now that you are entered into connubial life, you disclose in your dress proofs of vanity and affectation, or plunge headlong into the wild hurry of amusements ; the censure which you deserve is greater than it would be, were you single. Any approach towards those indelicate fashions in attire, which levity and shamelessness occasionally introduce, would for the same reason be even more blameable in you now than heretofore. The general subjects of dress and amusements have occupied so much attention in the preceding pages, that it is unnecessary to dilate

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(g) Luke, vi. 35.

(h) Acts, xx. 35.

upon them here. There is, however, one point which requires a few words. It is a common observation that those women, who in public are most addicted to finery in dress, are in private the greatest slatterns. Let the dread of verifying it contribute in its reasonable degree to extinguish the propensity to finery in your breast. Remember that any disgusting habit on your part will be the more offensive to your husband, on account of the closeness of the union subsisting between you.

St. Paul, among various admonitions relating to married women in particular, enforces on them the duty of being "keepers at home (i)." The precept, in its application to modern times, may be considered as having a two-fold reference. It may respect short visits paid to acquaintances and friends in the vicinity of your residence; or excursions, which require an absence of considerable duration. In the remarks about to be offered, I mean not to allude to visits or excursions, which are undertaken on fit occasions from benevolence to neighbours who are in affliction, from considerations of personal health (k), or from any other

(i) Titus, ii. 5.

(k) Yet it may not be unnecessary to observe that, when a previous disposition to rambling exists, it sometimes presses motives of health into the service of inclination in a manner not altogether warrantable: and that, even in persons who are attached to their own homes, the reasonable attention which is due to health is seen occasionally to deviate into the absurdities of whim and folly, absurdities which gain strength from every indulgence. "It is surprising," said Dr. Johnson, "how people will go to a distance for what they may have at home. I knew a lady who came up from Lincolnshire to Knightsbridge with one of her daughters, and gave five guineas a week for a lodging and a warm bath, that is, mere warm water. *That, you know, could not be had in Lincolnshire. She said it was made either too hot or too cold there.*" Boswell's Tour to the Hebrides, 2d edit. p. 354.



urgent motive of duty and utility. I shall speak of such only as are nearly or altogether spontaneous; of visits which are made in the common intercourse of society, and of journies which arise from curiosity and the prospect of entertainment. Of these voluntary absences from home, each kind is proper in its season, each culpable and pernicious in its excess.

Formerly, when the want of turnpike roads and of other accommodations, now universal, precluded families in the same district from visiting each other, except on long previous notice, and rendered each visit an object of almost as much solicitude and preparation as now precede a fashionable trip to the Continent; what was the result? Stiffness of manners, arrogant pomp, prejudices never to be removed, and animosities entailed with the paternal estate. At present, facility of access and intercourse exposes women, and not only those who are fixed in towns, or within a small distance of towns, but most of those also who live in the country, to the danger of acquiring a habit of continual visiting, and the other habits which St. Paul justly ascribes to those who have contracted the former practice. "They learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not (1)." The "wanderers" of the present day could not have been more happily characterised, had the Apostle been witness of their proceedings. If, week after week, the mornings be perpetually frittered away in making calls, and the afternoons swallowed up by dining visits; what but idleness can be the consequence? Domestic business is interrupted; vigilance as to family concerns is suspended; industry, reflection, mental and religious improvement, are deserted and forgotten. The mind grows listless; home

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(1) 1 Tim. v. 13.



becomes dull; the carriage is ordered afresh; and a remedy for the evil is sought from the very cause which produced it. From being "idle" at home, the next step naturally is to be "tattlers and busy-bodies" abroad. In a succession of visits, all the news of the vicinity is collected; the character and the conduct of each neighbouring family are scrutinised; neither age nor sex escapes the prying eye and inquisitive tongue of curiosity. Each "tattler" anxious to distinguish herself by the display of superior knowledge and discernment, indulges unbounded license to her conjectures; seizes the flying report of the hour as an incontrovertible truth; and renders her narratives more interesting by embellishment and aggravation. And all, in revealing secrets, in judging with rashness, in censuring with satisfaction, in propagating slander, and in various other ways, "speak things which they ought not."

The commodiousness, which now attends travelling, has rendered distant expeditions and long absences from home far more frequent than they were in the days of our ancestors. By a more extensive communication with the world, knowledge, liberality of sentiment, and refinement of manners, have been widely diffused. Rational curiosity has gladly availed itself of the ease and convenience with which the pleasure that attends the inspection of celebrated works of art, and of grand and beautiful scenes of nature, may be enjoyed. Occasional journeys undertaken for such purposes, though neither the improvement of health, nor any other urgent call of duty, should be among the motives which give birth to them, are at suitable times not only innocent but commendable. Such journeys, if entered upon with right dispositions, and if the objects to be visited be selected with judgement, in addition to the gratification which they furnish, impart useful knowledge, and call into exercise the best feelings of the heart. The contemplation of human talents actively and beneficially employed leads the mind to

Him who gave them. The survey of seas and rivers, mountains and forests, and of cultivated regions overspread with fertility, teaches the stupendous power, and the no less stupendous goodness of God. And the first and strongest impressions which we ought to receive and cherish when we behold the ingenuity of man, or the magnificence and beauty of nature, are a sense of the perfections, and a desire to promote the glory of their common Author. But the numerous and protracted excursions from the family mansion, which fashion, the desire of displaying wealth, and the restlessness of a vacant mind, excite at present, are productive of consequences very unfavourable to individuals and to the public. I do not speak of the expence with which they are usually attended ; though it is in many cases a burden which presses heavily on private fortunes, and cripples the exertions and extinguishes the ardour of benevolence. Nor shall I enlarge on the interruption of domestic habits and occupations, nor on the acquisition of an unsettled, a tatling, and a meddling spirit ; evils which spring from the custom of “ wandering ” from place to place, no less than from that of “ wandering from house to house ; ” and often display themselves in the former case on a wider scale and in stronger characters than in the latter. But the loss of the power and opportunity of doing good, and the positive effects of a pernicious example, are points which must not be overlooked. Home is the center round which the influence of every married woman is accumulated. It is there that she will naturally be known and respected the most ; it is there, at least, that she may be more known and more respected than she can be in any other place. It is there that the general character, the acknowledged property, and the established connections of her husband, will contribute with more force than they can possess elsewhere, to give weight and impressiveness to all her proceedings. Home, therefore is the place where the pattern which she exhibits in personal

manners, in domestic arrangements, and in every branch of her private conduct, will be more carefully observed, and more willingly copied by her neighbours in a rank of life similar to that which she occupies, than it would be in a situation where she was a little known and transitory visitant. Home too is the place where she will possess peculiar means of doing good among the humbler classes of society. All the favourable circumstances already mentioned, which surround her there, add singular efficacy to her persuasions, to her recommendations, to her advice. Her habitual insight into local events and local necessities, and her acquaintance with the characters and the situations of individuals, enable her to adapt the relief which she affords to the merit and to the distress of the person assisted. They enable her, in the charitable expenditure of any specific sum, to accomplish purposes of greater and more durable utility than could have been attained in a place where she would not have enjoyed these advantages. They who are frequently absent from home, without an adequate cause, spontaneously abandon in a very considerable degree all these especial means of benefiting their equals, their inferiors, possibly even their superiors ; means which Providence has committed to them, in order that each might be thus employed ; means for the due employment of each of which they will be held responsible hereafter. Continually on the wing from one scene to another, they are like trees transplanted so often, that they take firm root no where. They appear covered with shewy verdure ; but they bear little fruit. The ties of connection between them and the vicinity are broken. With the upper ranks, their intercourse is that of form and hurry ; to the lower, they are become distant, cold, and estranged. When at their nominal home, they are there without attachment. They perch there, like a wearied bird on a branch, rather as having found a convenient baiting-place, than from partiality to the spot. Every person who comes to see them expects

to hear of another approaching expedition ; and if he find himself mistaken, surprises all whom he meets with the wonder. The habit grows by indulgence. Every trifle swells into a motive and a pretext for quitting their natural residence. In the winter, London is the magnet which attracts them. The desire of appearing polite, and the pride of being able to speak of having recently visited the metropolis, conspire with their impatience of home. If they hear that a neighbouring family is going to town, to stay behind becomes intolerable. When stationed in the capital, some impending festivity, some approaching day of splendor at Court, affords an excuse for delaying their return. When summer commences, the center of attraction is transferred to some watering place ; and its force again proves irresistible. Neither are the intervals between these prominent periods in the system of wandering condemned wholly to the dreariness of the family seat. Little tours to see sights, long circuits of visits from the house of one acquaintance to that of another, and various incidental excursions, break the wearisome periods into small parts ; and aided by the cheering hope of longer expeditions, render life capable of being endured. When the rage of rambling has seized a woman, it is not always that the malady proceeds to the height which has been described. Like other maladies, it has its degrees. Neither are its attacks confined to the female sex. The duties of the Master of the family, of the Parent, of the Landlord, of the Country Gentleman, are on many occasions grossly neglected in consequence of the immoderate indulgence of a propensity to roving. The occupier of the land, deprived of the friendly intercourse, which formerly subsisted between him and the owner, and created a mutual regard, tempered with respect on one side, and strengthened by affability and kindness on the other ; is degraded into a dependent on the caprice of a steward. The absence of a common patron who used to conciliate differences, to en-

courage the meritorious, to overawe the refractory, is severely felt in the neighbouring villages and hamlets. The rents of the estate, which formerly were expended on the spot to the general benefit of the vicinity, are now sunk in the metropolis, or absorbed in some fashionable resort of dissipation. I apprehend, however, that it happens much more frequently that the husband is led from home in accommodation to the humours of his wife, than that the latter is dragged away by the determination of her husband. But be that conjecture true or false, the moral obligation incumbent on you, who now read these lines, if you be a wife, is the same. To you the Apostolic precept in either case is equally addressed. In either case, the Apostle equally enjoins you to be a "keeper at home." Obey the spirit of the injunction. Remember the duties which you have to perform at home, duties not so well to be performed elsewhere ; and the good which you can there accomplish by exertions and liberality, that would by no means be equally productive of advantage in a place where you were comparatively a stranger. Study to give the benefit of your example and of your benevolence, chiefly to those, whom Providence entitles to it by having placed them within the natural sphere of your influence. Instead of encouraging a gadding and unsettled spirit in others, by imitating the pattern which they exhibit ; study by exhibiting a better to improve them, or at least to exculpate yourself.

Let your behaviour to all your acquaintance be the result of modesty united with benevolence. Be obliging to all with whom you associate ; cultivate the friendship of the good ; and stedfastly persist in shunning all habitual intercourse with persons of bad or of doubtful character, however complying others may be around you. To be thus complying, is to impair the salutary principle of shaming into obscurity the corrupting example of vice : it is to withdraw from virtue the collateral support, which it derives from the dread of general disgrace. Be consistent in the selection of your asso-



ciates; and proportion, as nearly as circumstances may allow, your intercourse with individuals to their intrinsic worth. Pursue not the society of women of higher rank than your own; be not elated by their notice; look not down on those who enjoy it not. If one of your neighbours, one who in a drawing-room was accustomed to be ranged below you, be suddenly raised, in consequence of a title being conferred on her family, to pre eminence in her turn; envy her not, love her not the less, pant not for similar advancement. You already enjoy a decoration, or, if you do not, the fault is your own, superior to all the glories of the Peerage. "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." If your husband should happen to receive some accession of dignity; let it not excite in your mind one arrogant emotion, nor change your demeanour to your friends and neighbours. "New and unaccustomed dignities," to use the words of an accurate observer of manners, "often inspire weak minds with a disposition to display supercilious airs and a ridiculous deportment towards those whom they consider as their inferiors, and from whom they are jealous of a want of respect because of their late equality. Something of this kind is observable even in England, particularly in the wives of new-created Baronets, and the families of new-created Peers. But in England airs of this kind are received with such contempt, and sometimes repelled with such severity, that they are seldom assumed (*m*)." Shun such airs with unremitting solicitude. Shun them, however, on the principle of Christian humility, far more than from an expectation of the contempt with which they may be returned. "Let your moderation be known unto all (*n*);" not by artificial condes-

(*m*) Dr. Moore's View of the causes and progress of the French Revolution, Vol. i. p. 131.

(*n*) Philip. iv. 5.



cension, which either betrays the pride which it was intended to conceal, or indicates at best a misguided judgement; but by perseverance in the same ingenuous affability, the same diffident mildness, the same benevolent concern for the happiness of all your friends and acquaintance, which you cultivated before your elevation. Beware, lest the acquisition of honour should create a desire of distinction, which previously did not exist in your breast. She, who, as long as her husband was a Commoner, was contented in her station, has often been seen, when a Peere-s, to be inflamed with tormenting eagerness to ascend higher in the scale of Nobility.

The remark has been made, and perhaps with justice, that if attention be directed to the character and conduct of the different parts of families resident in the vicinity of each other, it will commonly be found, that less cordiality prevails between the ladies than between their husbands. It is certain, that neighbouring gentlemen are continually set at variance by very unwarrantable causes; by petty offences unworthy of consideration; by diversities of opinion concerning points, of which each individual is entitled to judge for himself; by contending claims which ought to have been settled by amicable arbitration, or by an amicable reference to the decision of law. Trespasses, real or supposed, on manerial rights; transgressions against the sublime code of fox-hunting jurisprudence; differences of sentiment as to the measures of those who guide the helm of Government, or as to the nomination of a candidate to represent some adjoining borough at an election: these are circumstances frequently sufficient openly to embroil half the gentlemen of the district with their neighbours; or at least to produce, while the semblance of friendship is upheld, the lurking malevolence of enmity. By some of these causes of disagreement even the female bosom is capable of being actuated. And the ill-will produced by any

one of them in the breast of the master of the family will generally diffuse itself through the house. In addition to the shynesses and dissensions between ladies in the same vicinity, which originate from these sources, there are others springing from that irritability respecting circumstances of personal attention which, in the female sex, is singularly conspicuous. In all cases where contempt and neglect are to be apprehended, women are far more quick-sighted than men: and their anxiety on the subject misleads them, on a variety of occasions, into suspicions for which there is no foundation. When the mind is in this state, if a visit be not returned at the customary time; the delay, should no strong reason for it present itself at once to the expecting party, is attributed to fastidiousness and pride. If an invitation be not given at the time, or to the extent, which was secretly desired, similar motives are assigned. An obscure or ambiguous expression, used inadvertently, is twisted into an injurious or a disdainful meaning. Silence, or seriousness of manner, proceeding from accidental thoughtfulness, or from some casual vicissitude of health, is construed into premeditated coolness. Common attentions of civility shewn towards a third person are indignantly beheld as tokens of deliberate preference. Hence arise prejudices and antipathies, which years may not be able to eradicate. Or silly affronts are taken on points of precedence. Because a lady is ushered forth in a ball-room to dance, before another who deemed herself superior; the company is thrown into confusion, and lasting hostilities take place between the parties. Yet the priority was perhaps assigned, where, according to the rules of etiquette, it was due. Or the merits of the momentous case, though determined erroneously, might be so nearly balanced, that the whole assembled college of heralds would have been perplexed to decide the question. Where then is the spirit inculcated by the Apostle? "Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory;

“ but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better  
“ than themselves (o).”

In the progress of matrimonial life it is scarcely possible but that the wife and the husband will discover faults in each other, which they had not previously expected. The discovery is by no means a proof, in many cases it is not even a presumption, that deceit had originally been practised. Affection, like that Christian charity of whose nature it largely participates, in its early periods “ hopeth all things, “ beliveth all things (p).” Time and experience, without necessarily detracting from its warmth, superadd judgement and observation. The characters of the parties united mutually expand; and disclose those little recesses which, even in dispositions most inclined to be open and undisguised, scarcely find opportunities of unfolding themselves antecedently to marriage. Intimate connection and uninterrupted society reveal shades of error in opinion and in conduct, which, in the hurry of spirits and the dazzled state of mind peculiar to the season of growing attachment, escaped the vigilant eye of solicitude. Or the fact unhappily may be, that in consequence of new scenes, new circumstances, new temptations, failings which did not exist when the matrimonial state commenced, may have been contracted since. The stream may have derived a debasing tincture from the region through which it has lately flowed. But the fault, whether it did or did not exist while the parties were single, is now discerned. What then is to be the consequence of the discovery? Is affection to be repressed, is it to be permitted to grow languid, because the object of it now appears tintured with some few additional defects? I allude not to those flagrant desertions of moral and religious principle, those extremes of depravity, which are not unknown to the

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(o) Philip. i. 3.

(p) 1 Cor. xiii. 7.

connubial state, and give a shock to the tenderest feelings of the heart. I speak of those common failings, which long and familiar intercourse gradually detects in every human character. Whether they are perceived by the husband in the wife, or by the wife in the husband, to contribute by every becoming method to their removal is an act of duty strictly incumbent on the discoverer. It is more than an act of duty: it is the first office of love. "Thou shalt not *hate thy neighbour in suffering sin upon him (q)*," is a precept, the disregard of which is the most criminal in those persons, by whom the warmest regard for the welfare of each other ought to be displayed.

In the course of the foregoing pages I have had occasion fully to notice the power which a married woman possesses of influencing the dispositions of her husband, and the consequent duty of rightly employing it for the improvement of his moral and religious character. It remains now to guard the wife against the effect of emotions and impressions, which might prevent her from reaping the benefit of similar exertions of duty and kindness on the part of her husband. Let her beware of discouraging him, by irritability of temper, or by inconsiderate proneness to misconstruction, from communicating to her his opinion, when he believes that she has fallen, or is in danger of falling, into error. To point out failings in the spirit of kindness, is one of the clearest indications of friendship. It is, however, one of those delicate offices from which friendship may the most easily be deterred. If a husband find his endeavours to discharge it frequently misconceived; if he see them usually producing perturbations difficult to be allayed, and extending far and wide beyond the original subject of discussion; he may learn to think it wiser to let an evil exist

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(q) Levit. xix. 17.

in silence, than to attempt to obviate it at the hazard of a greater. If his conscience at any time call upon him to set before his associate in connubial life some defect, either in her general conduct, or in a particular instance; he ought unquestionably to fulfil the task with a lively conviction of his own imperfections, and of the need which he has of indulgence and forbearance on her part. He ought to fulfil it with a tenderness of manner flowing from the genuine warmth of affection; with an ardent solicitude to shun as far as may be possible the appearance of authoritative injunctions; and with prudence adapting itself to the peculiarities of the mind which he is desirous to impress. In all cases he ought to guard, with scrupulous anxiety, against exciting in the breast of his wife a suspicion that he is purposely minute in prying into her failings; and against loading her spirits with groundless apprehensions that the original glow of his attachment is impaired by those which he has noticed. He ought to remember, that however culpable the disposition may be, there is yet a disposition not unfrequent in women no less than in men when restrained, and in their own opinion without sufficient cause, from proceeding in any particular path, to feel in consequence of the restraint itself a strong propensity to advance farther in that path than they had proceeded before. But what if in one or in more of these points he should be negligent and defective? Let not a momentary quickness of manner, let not an inadvertent expression hastily dropping from his lips, nor even the discovery of some emotions stained with human infirmity, be noticed with resentment, or followed by retort and recrimination. Though he should evidently be liable to just censure himself, his admonition may yet be wise; his reproof, if he be necessitated even to reprove, may be just. Though on former occasions he should have been hurried into animadversion without reason, there may be reason for his animadversion now. Let him not be thought



partial and unwarrantably strict, if he should chauce to observe, and to observe with some indications of disquietude, a failing when exemplified by his wife, which in other women he had scarcely regarded. Is it surprising that he should be alive to circumstances in the conduct of the person most intimately connected with him, which affected him little or not at all in a more distant relation, in an acquaintance, in a stranger? It sometimes happens, when a married woman has not been led to attend to considerations such as those which have now been suggested, that advice which, if given by the husband, would not have met with a favourable acceptance, is thankfully received from others. To know that this state of things is possible should be a lesson to the husband against misconduct and imprudence; for to them its existence may be owing. But let it also be to the wife an admonition against captiousness and prejudice; for had she been free from them, it could not have existed.

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### CHAPTER XIII.

DUTIES OF MATRIMONIAL LIFE CONTINUED, WITH A VIEW  
TO THE DIFFERENT SITUATIONS AND CIRCUMSTANCES  
OF DIFFERENT INDIVIDUALS.

THE reflections which have hitherto been made on the duties of married women have had little reference to particularities of rank or situation. Yet by such particularities, moral advantages and disadvantages, duties and temptations, are in many instances created or diversified. London and the country, elevated rank and a middle station, differ so far from each other in some of the opportunities of good



and evil which they respectively furnish ; that a little time and attention may not be unprofitably employed in explaining some of the points of difference, and enforcing the obligations which severally result from them. It will, perhaps, be found that no observation can be addressed to a person resident in the metropolis, which in certain circumstances, may not be applied with propriety to the conduct of the wife of a country gentleman ; nor any admonition suggested to the higher ranks which may not be transferred with slight alteration to some of the inferior orders of the community. In the remarks therefore which are about to be submitted to the reader, though, for the sake of perspicuity, some of the duties respectively incumbent on married women of different descriptions may be investigated under separate heads, corresponding to the different situations of the parties ; I would by no means wish it to be understood, that a suggestion which is primarily offered to the attention of one class of married women, may not appertain in a certain measure to all.

Among the temptations to which a lady resident in London is by that circumstance exposed, few are more ensnaring than those, the primary and immediate effect of which is to encroach upon time. The public amusements, which the metropolis and its precincts afford, are daily seen to prove so fascinating by their number and their variety to every part, especially to the younger part, of the polite world, as to occupy a very large proportion of the day and of the evening ; or, to speak with more propriety, of those hours, whether before or after midnight, during which the polite world is abroad. For it is not merely the time actually spent in the enjoyment of the amusement which is to be placed to the account. The hours of preparation which precede, and those of languor and inactivity which follow, equally belong to it. Neither do the scenes of public entertainment lose their power, as far as the consumption of time is in question,

over those who, satiated and palled by tedious familiarity, no longer find in any spectacle or mode of diversion the gratification which it once bestowed. The delights of novelty are past ; but the chains of fashion and habit are riveted. The mind, incapable through disuse of relishing better pursuits, experiences in the theatre and the rotunda, if not a positive satisfaction, yet a relief from the dullness of vacancy, and the painfulness of intercourse with itself. But it is unnecessary to dwell on a topic which has already been the subject of much observation. Let us turn our thoughts to other circumstances, which, if not peculiar to the capital, yet exist there to an extent not to be paralleled elsewhere ; and occasion in all places, according to the degree in which they exist, an unprofitable consumption of time, and all the evils attendant on the waste of irrevocable hours.

London is the centre to which almost all the individuals who fill the upper and middle ranks of society are successively attracted. The country pays its tribute to the supreme city. Business, interest, curiosity, the love of pleasure, the desire of knowledge, the thirst for change, the ambition to be deemed polite, occasion a continual influx into the metropolis from every corner of the kingdom. Hence a large and a widely dispersed and a continually increasing acquaintance is the natural consequence of frequent residence in London. If a married lady suffer herself to be drawn into the system of proceeding, to which such an acquaintance is generally seen to lead ; useful occupations and improving pursuits are either at an end, or are carried on with extreme disadvantages, multiplied interruptions, declining activity, ardour, and satisfaction. The morning, the period at least which is called the morning, is swallowed up in driving from street to street, from square to square, in pursuit of persons whom she is afraid of discovering, in knocking at doors where she dreads being admitted. Time is frittered away in a sort of small intercourse with numbers, for whom she feels little

regard, and whom she knows to feel as little for herself. Yet every thing breathes the spirit of cordiality and attachment. The pleasure expressed at meeting is so warm, the enquiries after each other's health are so minute, the solicitude, if either party has caught a cold at the last opera, is so extreme ; that a stranger to the ways of high life, and to the true value of words in the modern dictionaries of compliment, would be in astonishment at such effusions of disinterested benevolence. Invitation succeeds invitation ; engagement presses on engagement : etiquette offers, form accepts, and indifference assumes the air of gratitude and rapture. Thus a continual progress is made in the looks, the language, and the feelings of insincerity. A lady thus busied, thus accomplished, becomes disinclined to friendship, or unqualified for it. She has too many acquaintances to be at leisure to have a friend. The unrestrained communication of sentiment, the concern of genuine sympathy, the manifestation of kind affections by deeds of kindness, require time, and calmness, and deliberation, and retirement. Their demands are such as dissipation is least able and least willing to satisfy.

There seems at present to be an opinion gaining ground in high life, that in visiting, no less than in amusements, it is necessary that all polite ladies should go every-whither ; an opinion among the most pernicious of those which pervade the modern system of fashionable manners. Hence it arises that women of amiable deportment and unblemished character are often seen to frequent routs, and other similar meetings, in houses, the mistresses of which they hold in merited abhorrence. This consequence alone might be sufficient to manifest the mischievous tendency of the opinion from which it flows. But the same erroneous persuasion contributes also to confirm many women in their practice of hurrying, evening after evening, from company to company, from diversion to diversion ; deprives them of

all desire and all opportunity of reflection on the tempers and dispositions of their own hearts; and incapacitates them for tranquil recreations and rational employments.

Next to those principles of Christian "sobriety," which the Scriptures again and again inculcate on women, whether single or in matrimonial life, as well in precepts addressed immediately to the female sex (*r*), as in others directed to Christians in general (*s*); one of the most powerful preservatives against this prevailing abuse of time, and all its unhappy effects on the mind, is a settled habit of methodical employment. Let it be founded on a fair review of the several duties daily to be performed, and of their relative nature and importance. To devote with regularity certain hours to certain purposes may be somewhat more difficult in the crowd and hurry of the metropolis, than in the tranquility of a rural residence. But the same circumstances, which cause the difficulty of adhering to a predetermined plan, prove the necessity of instituting one and of observing it. For how would that which can scarcely be attained even with the aid of method and habit, be accomplished if left to depend on chance? Not that adherence to plan is to be carried to the punctilious excess of never tolerating the smallest deviation. But the danger of acquiring a custom of deviating, and of thus being gradually seduced from your resolution, is so formidable, that some occasional inconveniences may well be endured in order to avoid it. In methodising time, as in all plans of life, let the standard which you propose to yourself be reasonable, if you would find it useful. Cheat not yourself into indolence by aiming at little. Neither let your desire to perform much lead you into the error of setting yourself to imitate a pattern which you are aware

(*r*) Titus, ii. 4.—1 Tim. ii. 9. 15.—iii. 11.

(*s*) 1 Thes. v. 6. 8.—1 Peter, 1. 13.—iv. 7.—v. 8. &c. &c.

is carried to an extreme, with the view that notwithstanding your probable deficiencies you may still reach the point, which you already discern to be the proper medium. This is not sober and rational conduct. It is to attempt to prevent yourself from seeing that which you cannot but see. It is to try to impose on yourself by a scheme which you know to be an artifice. It is to prepare pretexts for remissness, and temptations to abandon the whole undertaking. Proceed according to the plain dictates of common sense. Trace out to yourself the exact line which your judgement tells you that you ought to follow, and endeavour to pursue it with accuracy. Remember your domestic duties; inform your mind; seek to advance in piety; be not snatched into the wild vortex of amusements; dare to refuse an invitation. Be not shaken from your rational purposes and rational modes of life, by the surprise, the ridicule, the specious but hollow arguments, of the giddy and dissipated of your own sex; who “think it strange (*l*) that he run not with them “to the same excess of riot,” and like those whom the Apostle describes, if they cannot persuade or allure you, will probably strive “to speak evil of you.” Leave them to their folly and their unhappiness; and pursue steadily the dictates of your understanding and your conscience. Comply not with any practice which you deem intrinsically wrong in order to gain the good word of multitudes. Incur not the guilt of those who “loved the praise of men (of human “beings) more than the praise of God (*u*).” Retrench the intercourse of form within narrow limits. Cultivate the affections of the heart. In the vast concourse of the capital, there are numbers of your own sex, and of a station corresponding to that which you occupy, who are worthy of your friendship. Cherish such friendships as instruments of

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(*l*) 1 Peter, iv. 4.

(*u*) John, xii. 43.



comfort, of virtue, and of usefulness. Co-operate, procure co-operation, in aiding not only with your purse but with the influence, be it greater or smaller, which your situation possesses, public and private institutions of Charity; and those in particular which are calculated for the relief of female distress. Mindful of the scarcity of modes of employment in which persons of the female sex can properly engage for a subsistence (x), encourage women in all such occupations by steady and active preference. You can scarcely render to your own sex a more important benefit. In relieving the temporal affliction of your fellow creatures, forget not the highest office of Charity, that of providing for their religious improvement. Extend your researches and your beneficence to the villages and hamlets thickly strewn round the metropolis, and corrupted by its vicinity. Do good by exertion and by example; be a blessing to others and to yourself.

Another temptation which attends women who reside in London, and who are entitled to mix in the higher circles of life, originates from this circumstance; that the capital is the seat of Government, the centre of political power and political intelligence. Hence the desire which women are prone to feel of associating more and more with persons of rank, a desire which on many occasions is of itself sufficiently seductive to betray them into extravagance and indiscretion, derives an additional incentive. It is among Peeresses and the wives of Members of Parliament, and those whose husbands discharge the executive functions of

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(x) This evil might be considerably lessened. Several kinds of shops, now chiefly in the possession of men, might be conducted with ease by women. Would not propriety also be consulted by a transfer of some occupations from the former sex to the latter? Why has the indelicate custom of ladies employing hair-dressers of the other sex been tolerated so long?



Government, or are stationed in some of the subordinate departments of office, that we are to look for the persons whom the rage of politics seizes first. At their own houses, and at the houses of their near connections, they are accustomed to hear questions relating to the national welfare canvassed. They witness a miniature resemblance of the Parliamentary debate of the preceding evening. They become personally acquainted with some of the public characters, whom eloquence and talents have elevated into fame. To listen to the censure and to the applause severally bestowed on individuals in the political world, while it excites and nourishes curiosity, pleases and foment the spirit of party. To be addressed in private circles, though it be only on the state of the weather, by him whom Senates have admired, stimulates while it gratifies ambition. By degrees they catch the passions of the other sex, and are transformed into professed partisans; and when the change has once taken place, generally exceed their husbands in violence, and bitterness, and a prying spirit. To worm out a political secret, to extract from the highest authority the earliest tidings of a victory, of a defeat, of a projected dismissal from office, of an intended pension or grant of nobility, is an object which calls forth the utmost exertions of their adroitness. When they have attained it, the pride of triumph commences. They hasten from dressing-room to dressing-room, from assembly to assembly, spreading the news as they fly along, exaggerating the truth to heighten astonishment, and confounding their rivals with the blaze of superior intelligence. In the mean time their attention is not blind to more substantial acquisitions. They omit neither address nor importunity towards men in power, when there is a hope that the one or the other may affect the distribution of preferment. To obtain a living, an appointment, a step in naval or in military promotion, for a relation or a dependent, affords them the double delight of conferring an

obligation on a person whom they are desirous to serve, and of displaying their interest with the rulers of the state. The spirit of freedom and of respect for popular opinion, by which the English Constitution and Government were happily distinguished from the ancient monarchy of France; and the spirit of steadiness and order by which they have been distinguished no less happily from the modes of political administration to which the French monarchy has given place; have precluded the ladies of this country from advancing to those enormous lengths in political intrigue, which have been successfully attempted on the Continent. The pattern, however, exhibited at Paris, has long been imitated in London as nearly as circumstances would allow. In proportion as the example of ladies in the highest circles furnishes encouragement to vanity or to hope; it is studied and followed by numbers of their female acquaintance, whose situation gives them an opportunity of treading, though at an humble distance, in the same steps. Even women who have no connection with the political hemisphere are seen to be inspired by the passion communicated from their superiors; imbibe the quintessence of political attachment and antipathy; and by the ardour with which they copy the only part of their model which they have the means of emulating, shew that it is not through want of ambition that they are left behind in the race.

It may, indeed, be stated generally that, in consequence of the peculiar circumstances already specified, by which the capital is distinguished, the love of eminence and the thirst of admiration are there roused by incitements far more powerful than any other place could supply. Hence, whatever be the object to which female ambition is directed; whether it aspire to be conspicuous as the leader of fashion and the oracle of politeness; or as the stately associate of rank of dignity, to outshine all its competitors in the display of magnificence; or to anticipate them in the knowledge of

political transactions, and drive them from the field in every struggle for the acquisition of political favours; it is in the metropolis that it hurries its votary to unparalleled extremes of folly, of pride, of envy, of extravagance. The estimation in which the Scriptures hold such passions and such conduct, or, to speak with more propriety, the judgements there denounced against them, have been noticed already with such particularity, that they must be fresh in the reader's recollection. Let us for once attend to advice from the mouth of a Pagan, addressed to the ladies of the most polite city of ancient times. "Be ambitious of attaining those virtues which are the principal ornaments of your sex. Cherish your instinctive modesty; and look upon it as your highest commendation not to be the subject of public discourse (y)."

That instinctive modesty, so deserving of being cherished, requires, like every other virtue, to be strengthened by culture; and is perhaps of all virtues that which, when impaired, is the most difficult to be restored to its original sensibility. In the rude conflicts of the world it is in all situations exposed to serious risk of being imperceptibly worn away. In the metropolis the danger is aggravated partly by the shamelessness with which vice, confident in the number of its adherents, there shews its face abroad; partly by the rank of many of the vicious, which draws on their wickedness the eye of public attention; and partly by means of the softening appellations which fashion, enlisted in the service of profligacy, has devised for the most flagrant breaches of the laws of God and man. Hence, not only among the unprincipled, but in virtuous families, among women of modesty, and by women of modesty, conversation is not unfrequently turned to criminal topics and

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(y) Speech of Pericles to the Athenian women. Thucydides, Book ii.

incidents, of which, to use the language of an Apostle, "it is a shame even to speak (z)." To conceive that delicacy of sentiment should not thus be undermined is impossible. The evil now in question contaminates the country also; but, though not restricted to the metropolis, it is there most prevalent. It ought to be added, that men of worth are, in numberless cases, highly censurable for the little regard which they evince to female delicacy even in their own families, by the subjects of conversation which they introduce or pursue. The mischief done is not the less, because the phraseology may be guarded.

The habits of life which prevail in the metropolis, and particularly in fashionable families, are, in several respects, totally repugnant to the cultivation of affection and conjugal happiness. The husband and the wife are systematically kept asunder. Separate establishments, separate sets of acquaintance, separate amusements, all conspire to render them first strangers, and afterwards indifferent, to each other. If they find themselves brought together in mixed company, to be mutually cold, inattentive, and forbidding, is politeness. They who are inspired, or are supposed to be inspired, with the warmest attachment, are reciprocally to behave with a degree of repulsive unconcern, which if exhibited towards a third person, would be construed as an affront. The truth is, that such unnatural maxims of behaviour have originated from cases in which, however blamable, they were not artificial. They have sprung from that indifference which was really felt. But those persons who are solicitous to preserve affection, will do well to cherish the outward manifestations of regard. Be it admitted, that it is possible to disgust by an ill-timed display of the familiarity of fondness. But let it be remembered,

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(z) Ephes. v. 12.

that to disguise the natural feelings of the heart under the systematic restraints of assumed coldness, is offensive to every rational observer; at variance with simplicity and ingenuousness of character; and ultimately subversive of the tenderness of affection both in the party which practises the disguise, and in the person towards whom it is practised.

The influence of fashion, which of late has unhappily contributed in the metropolis to separate the husband and the wife, would have flowed in a more beneficial channel, had it been applied to draw closer the bands of domestic society. The wives of lawyers, of physicians, and of several other descriptions of men, are seldom allowed a large share of the company of their husbands. While the latter are occupied abroad by professional business, the former are left exposed to the temptations of a dissipated capital, temptations which borrow strength from weariness of solitude at home. Hence, in addition to the common obligations which press on the conscience of the married man, and bind him to study the comfort and the welfare of his partner, the husband thus circumstanced is under yet another tie to spend his leisure in the bosom of his family. Hence also the duty of the wife to render home, by the winning charms of her behaviour, attractive and delightful to her husband, derives additional force. Let her consider the numberless temptations to vice, to profusion, to idle amusement, with which he is encompassed. Let her remember with what various characters the business of his station renders him familiar; of whom some perhaps openly deride the principles of religion; others sap them by insidious machinations; others extenuate by their wit and talents the offensiveness of guilt; others add to the seducing example of gay wickedness the fascinations of rank and popularity. Is she desirous of his society? Would she confirm him in domestic habits? Would she fortify him against being allured



into the haunts of luxury, riot, and profaneness? Let her conduct shew that home is dear to herself in his absence, still dearer when he is present. Let her unaffected mildness, her ingenuous tenderness, display before his mind a forcible contrast to the violence, the artifice, the unfeeling selfishness, which he witnesses in his commerce with the world. Let the cheerful tranquillity of domestic pleasures stand forward to supply the place of trifling and turbulent festivity abroad. Let his house, so far as her endeavours can be effectual, be the abode of happiness; and he will surely have little temptation to bewilder himself in seeking for happiness under another roof.

There are motives of health or convenience which occasionally determine individuals, busied in mereantile concerns, rather to fix themselves at a country residence within a few miles of London than in the heart of the city; and thence to pay daily visits to their counting-houses in town. To the wives of persons thus circumstanced, the observations in the preceding paragraph may be addressed. It may indeed be said generally, that the turn of mind and the habits of life in the immediate neighbourhood of the capital are naturally become so far similar to those prevalent in St. James's square, that almost every remark on moral duties which is applicable to the latter situation, may be transferred to the former.

One of the duties which require to be expressly stated as incumbent on ladies who pass a large portion of the year in the metropolis, and especially on ladies of rank and influence, is the following; to endeavour to improve the general tone of social intercourse, and particularly in the article of amusements. Let them exchange the vast and promiscuous assemblages, which now crowd their suite of rooms from evening almost to day-break, for small and select parties, to which an unsullied character shall be a necessary introduction, and in which virtuous friendship and rational entertain-



ment may be enjoyed. Let them discountenance the prevailing system of late hours, which undermines the constitution ; and entails languor and idleness on that period of the day, which they who have not adopted the modern and destructive custom of late-rising know to be the most delightful and the most useful. Let them set up a standard against play, fashionable follies, and ensnaring customs ; and unite the innocent pleasures of improving and entertaining society with the smallest possible expence of time, money, and domestic order. The benefits which might accrue to the youth of both sexes from the amelioration of the general state of meetings for purposes of conversation and amusement in polite circles are incalculable. The prospect of a happy settlement in life for individuals, their domestic conduct, their domestic comfort, the manners and habits of various classes of the community prone to imbibe the opinions and to copy the example of their immediate superiors ; all these are circumstances which that amelioration would contribute to improve.

In the metropolis, the morals of servants are exposed to extraordinary dangers. By common temptations they are there beset more powerfully than in the country ; and have also to contend with others peculiar to the capital. Yet it is, perhaps, in London that they receive the least attention from masters and mistresses of families. The proper inference to be drawn from these facts is obvious. Act conformably to it in all points (*a*). Let not your domestics of either sex be suffered to depend for a part of their emoluments on the perquisites of gaming. Let them be guarded

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(*a*) "What are the duties of masters ? That they love their servants in a parental manner : that, prompted by this love, they attend to the good of their souls : that they give them their due reward : and that they treat them with mildness and forbearance." Freylinghausen, p. 196. These directions belong equally to the mistress of a family.

to the utmost of your power against the irreparable mischiefs, which attend the practice of insuring in state lotteries (*b*).

Ladies who, being united to men occupied in the transactions of trade and business, find themselves resident in the city, often shew that they are extremely dissatisfied with their situation. Accumulating riches repay them not for the apprehension of imputed vulgarity. Each wearies her husband with importunate earnestness that he would renounce the degrading profits of the counting-house and the shop, which he may now feel himself wealthy enough to despise; and exchange the ungenteel dulness of Lombard-street for the modish vicinity of the court. Affecting to look down on the polite world; deriding the barren rent-rolls of encumbered estates, apparent to their imagination through the veil of superficial splendor; they are eager to ape the follies and to crowd into the society of the gilded swarm which they would seem to hold in contempt. Ladies of fashion in the mean time are exulting, at the other end of the town, that the hands of their husbands were never contaminated with the filthy gains of commerce; and delight in turning into ridicule the awkward efforts of the citizen's wife to rival the assembly and the public breakfast of the Peeress by expence void of propriety, and pomp destitute of taste. It is thus that pride and envy, displaying themselves under opposite forms, are equally conspicuous in both parties.

When the period of residence in the metropolis is come to a conclusion, a lady is sometimes apt to display among her neighbours in the country, in a manner which cannot be mistaken, her consciousness that she is lately arrived from the centre of fashion and politeness. Her pride betrays itself under various aspects and modifications according to the

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(*b*) For some account of those mischiefs, see Colquhoun's "Treatise on the Police of the Metropolis," 2d edit. p. 163—169.

particular shades of her temper and dispositions, and the respective circumstances of the individuals thrown into her society. Sometimes it appears without disguise in supercilious stateliness. Sometimes it is revealed by the insolence of affected condescension. At one time, it expatiates on the intimacies which it has formed, or professes to have formed, in high life; and describes the persons, particularises the characters, and retails the conversation, of peers and peeresses. At another, it officiously shews itself to be lowering the tone of discourse to the level of the country; and with a parade of attention turns aside from subjects, with which it gives the company present to understand that they are not supposed to be acquainted. The contempt which airs of this nature evince is ever found to recoil on those who practise them.

A lady, when she leaves London ought to be careful not to corrupt the country by the introduction of foolish and culpable fashions. Her example, whichever way it turns, is likely to have considerable weight. In the metropolis she was only one in a crowd. Even there it was her duty invariably to recollect that her conduct would by no means be without influence on others; that the whole mass was composed of individuals; and that each individual was responsible for an individual share. But when she comes down to the family mansion, the eyes of the neighbourhood will be for a time turned upon herself. If she import a cargo of modish follies and modish vices, they will soon be diffused throughout the district in which she resides. If she neither introduce them herself, nor adopt them though they should be introduced into the vicinity; her friends and her acquaintance, those who see her and those who hear of her, will then dare not to give into them.

Among persons of the female sex who not only reside constantly in the country, but at the same time possess few opportunities of mixing with polished and intelligent society,

errors and failings originate, no less than among men, from the want of enlarged sentiments and a greater knowledge of the world. Prejudice shews itself in various shapes, and extends to a multitude of objects. Changes in manners and customs, though in reality for the better, are reprobated. The conduct of others, especially of those who move in a higher circle, is judged with acrimony. Little allowance is made for unseen motives and unknown circumstances. The spirit of party broods over imaginary offences. Sometimes its operations are more active: insomuch that ladies, instigated by vanity, and listening with greedy attention to the flatteries of some interested partizan of the other sex, who enlarges on the advantages which their interference would secure to a favourite candidate at an election, are seen to plunge into the rude intercourse and degrading occupations of a local contest. In small towns, and in their immediate neighbourhood, the spirit of detraction ever appears with singular vehemence. In the metropolis, and in other large cities, it may perhaps be no less active. There, however, its activity is dispersed amidst the crowd of individuals whom it assails. It has there such an overflowing abundance of delinquents, or supposed delinquents, to pursue, that persons who are not conspicuous in the routine of fashion, nor by any other incident particularly drawn forth into public notice, have a reasonable chance of escaping very numerous attacks. But here the smallness of the circle renders all who move in it universally known to each other. The objects on which curiosity can exercise her talents are so few, that she never withdraws her eye from any of them long; and she already knows so much respecting each, that she cannot rest until she has learned every thing. Nor is this all. Among the females who are acting their parts on so narrow a stage, clashings, and competitions, and dissensions, will have been frequent; and grudges of ancient date are revived to supply food for present malevolence and scandal.

A propensity to push fashions in dress to absurd extremes is also very general in country towns. Ladies who have been conversant with the polite world know that, however generally a particular mode may be prevalent, much latitude is still left to inclination and taste; and that a moderate degree of conformity is always sufficient to ward off the charge of singularity. But they who have seen less, or have been less observant, are in common so little aware either of this truth, or of the limits within which the existing mode is circumscribed, that in their zeal to outvie each other, and their dread of falling short of the pattern exhibited in high life, they urge their attempts at imitation to a preposterous excess. And while they are exulting in the thoughts that their head-dress is constructed, and their gown cut out and trimmed, precisely according to the latest model displayed by the arbiters of fashion in the capital; they would find, if they could transplant themselves into a public room in the metropolis, their appearance an extravagant caricature of the decorations of which they had conceived it to be an accurate resemblance.

Some of the duties and temptations severally pertaining to different married women in consequence of professional differences in the situations of their husbands remain to be considered.

It may be proper to direct our attention, in the first place, to the wives of clergymen. St. Paul, speaking of the ministers of the Gospel from the bishop to the deacon, adverts particularly to the conduct of their wives; and expressly requires, that they be "grave, not slanderous, sober, faithful" in all things (c). Not that any one of the virtues, which ought to ornament the wife of the clergyman, is not also required of every woman. But the apostle well knew that

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(c) 1 Tim. iii. 11.



the want of any of them would prove, in the way of example, far more prejudicial in the wife of a clergyman than in another person. Hence the repeated injunctions which he delivers to the teachers of Christianity, that they should “rule well their own families (*d*).” Hence too the promise given by every clergyman of the established Church of England at his admission into holy orders, that he will “frame and fashion his family, as well as himself, according to the doctrine of Christ; that both may be wholesome examples and patterns to his flock (*e*).” If a clergyman, whose office it is to guide others from the follies and corruptions of the world into the way of salvation, to “let his light so shine before men that they may see his good works and glorify,” by imitating them, “his Father who is in heaven (*f*),” forget that branch of his sacred function; if he indulge, I will not say in gross vices, but in those lighter instances of misconduct, which are yet sufficient to evince that religion holds not an undisputed predominance in his heart: the dullest understanding is quick-sighted enough to discern his faults, and to avail itself of the pretences which they may be represented as affording for criminal indulgences and carelessness in others. This observation may be extended in a certain degree to the example displayed by his family, more especially to that exhibited by his wife. Does she, who is the constant companion of a minister of religion, she who, in addition to the motives which press on all “women professing godliness (*g*),” all women who profess to believe and practise Christianity, is urged by peculiar obligations to the attainment of Christian excellence, prove herself actuated by a worldly temper? Is she aspiring, vain, giddy, calumnious, avaricious, or unfor- giving? She transgresses the laws of her Saviour, and disre-

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(*d*) 1 Tim. iii. 4, 5. 12.    (*e*) See the office of ordination.  
 (*f*) Matt. v. 6.            (*g*) 1 Tim. ii. 10.



gards the spirit of the Gospel, with strong circumstances of aggravation ; and contributes not a little to lessen the general effect of her husband's instructions from the pulpit. Such is the consequence of her defects, whatever be the station which the person to whom she is united may occupy in the church. In proportion to the eminence of that station, the mischief of her bad example is increased. On the other hand, if religion have its genuine effect on her manners and dispositions ; if it render her humble and mild, benevolent and candid, sedate, modest, and devout ; if it withdraw her inclinations from fashionable foibles and fashionable expences ; if it lead her to activity in searching out and alleviating the wants of the neighbouring poor, and in promoting, according to her situation and ability, schools and other institutions for the advancement of religion, and the encouragement of industry among the children in the diocese or the parish committed to her husband : she is a " fellow labourer," with him " in the Gospel." She prepares the hearts of all who listen to his instructions and exhortations to receive them without prejudice ; and attracts others to the spirit of Christianity by the amiable lustre which it diffuses round herself.

History affirms that, in the days of Queen Elizabeth, the wives of the prelates manifested no small dissatisfaction at not being permitted to share with their husbands the honours and privileges of nobility ; and that they applied with earnest but ineffectual solicitude to procure the removal of the fancied degradation. It is to the credit of the wives of modern bishops that so few indications of a similar spirit have appeared among them, as rarely, if ever to have been held up to public notice, even by those who have been the most acute in discovering, and the most active in divulging, the faults of persons closely connected with episcopacy. In every other respect let them be shining models of unaffected humility and moderation. Never let them be

induced by ties of consanguinity, or by any other motive, to strive to exert an improper influence on the judgement of their husbands as to the distribution of ecclesiastical preferment. It is no more than equity to acknowledge that in several instances the wife of a bishop is exposed to peculiar temptations of considerable strength. The prelate has, perhaps, little private fortune. He has been elevated from an humble condition. Though pomp and luxury be shunned as scrupulously as they ought to be, the unavoidable expences of his station, augmented by the occasional residence required from him in the capital, make deep inroads into his revenue. Under these circumstances his wife ought to be, in common with himself, uniformly mindful, not only that the elevation of his family terminates with his life, but that every attempt to provide for the continuance of a portion of that elevation by shutting the hand of charity, and greedily hoarding almost every thing that can be saved from the annual profits of the see, in order that the savings may roll up into a large fortune for his children, is utterly unjustifiable in the sight of God. Was he raised by merit? Let her not repine that her sons, whose merit, be it whatever it may, has not hitherto stood the test of time and experience, are to be reduced to the level whence he rose. If they should not have their father's success, they may yet equal his desert. Was he raised without adequate merit? Let her not regret that her children no longer possess that which in strictness even their father ought never to have enjoyed. Let her not secretly murmur at the prospect of descending, if she should survive him, to the station in which he would have left her had he died before his advancement to the mitre. Let her be thankful to Providence for the additional good which she is now enabled by the rank and situation of her husband to effect both in his diocese and elsewhere; and without anxiety leave that Being, who at present entrusts her with the power, to

determine whether it shall or shall not remain with her to the end of her days. The laws and usages, which withhold from the wife of a prelate the distinctions of peerage, will appear, when considered with a reference to the case of her widowhood, not less benevolent than wise. The shock of misfortune, as relating to outward circumstances, is extremely diminished. She can now retire without difficulty to modest privacy, unburdened with the real or imaginary sources of expence with which rank and titles would have oppressed her. She retires encircled with the respect which her own virtues and those of her husband have accumulated around her: and probably enriched with an accession of friends whose attachment, were it to be put to the trial, in an hour of distress, would not be found to deceive her hopes.

Some of the temptations to which the wife of a bishop is obnoxious, in consequence of the temporary nature of the income which she partakes, attach, in a certain measure, on women united to persons who possess inferior dignities in the church, and even on the wives of private clergymen. There is, in each case, a continually operating inducement to be too sparing in charity for the sake of providing for posterity. It is an inducement to which numbers are daily proving themselves superior; but as it acts with particular force on all descriptions of persons whose income descends not to those whom they leave behind, it well deserves to be pointed out in the way of caution. Attention to lay up provision for the future exigencies of a family is innocent, is laudable, when restricted within proper bounds, in an ecclesiastic as well as in others. It is only blamable when it proceeds to excess; when it interferes with the reasonable demands of benevolence. From that excess let the wife guard her husband and herself.

The wife of an officer in the naval or in the military service is, in several respects, exposed to moral trials of

considerable magnitude. In time of war she is left to endure the anxieties of a long separation from her husband, while he is toiling on the ocean, or contending in a distant quarter of the globe with the bullets of the enemy and the maladies of the climate. The state of tremulous suspense, when the mind is ignorant of the fate of the object which it holds most dear, and knows not but that the next post may confirm the most dreadful of its apprehensions, can be calmed only by those consolations which look beyond the present world. Let not despondency withhold the confidence due to the protecting Power of Him, "without whom not even a sparrow falleth to the ground. (*h*)" Let not solicitude question the wisdom which uniformly marks the determinations of that Being, one of whose characteristics it is to be "wonderful in counsel (*i*)": nor affliction forget that he has promised that "all things shall work together for good in the end to them that love him (*k*)."

When the husband is fighting the battles of his country, the whole management of the domestic œconomy of his family devolves upon his wife. Let her faithfully execute the trust, and shun even a distant approach towards extravagance. In her whole demeanour, let her guard against every symptom of levity, every trace of inadvertence, which might give rise to the misconceptions of ignorance, or awaken the censorious tongue of malice. Let it be her constant object that, if it shall please the Divine Providence to restore her husband, she may present herself before him at least as worthy of his esteem and love as she was when he left her. The wife of the military officer has sometimes to encounter new and peculiar temptations, at times when she is not separated from her husband. Various circumstances

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(*h*) Matth. x. 29.  
 (*k*) Romans, viii. 28.

(*i*) Isaiah, xxviii. 29.

frequently concur to lead her through the vicissitudes of a wandering life, in accompanying him successively from one country town where he is quartered to another ; and occasionally fix her during the time of war in the vicinity of the camp where his regiment is posted. Disuse to a settled home, and the want of those domestic occupations and pleasures, which no place of residence but a settled home can supply, tend to create a fondness for roving, an eagerness for amusement ; an inveterate propensity to card-playing ; and an aversion to every kind of reading, except the perusal of the mischievous trash which the circulating library pours forth for the entertainment of a mind unaccustomed to reflection. It unfortunately happens too, that in this situation, her society is not sufficiently composed of persons of her own sex. Feminine reserve, delicacy of manners, and even delicacy of sentiment, are in extreme danger of being worn away by living in habits of familiar intercourse with a crowd of officers ; among whom it is to be expected that there will be some who are absolutely improper companions, and more who are very undesirable associates. Duty and affection may in certain cases render it necessary, that a married lady should stand the brunt of these temptations. But the consequent danger should excite her to unwearied and universal circumspection ; and warn her to cultivate with unremitting vigilance those habits of privacy, and of useful and methodical employment, without which female diffidence, purity of heart, and a capacity for the enjoyment and the communication of domestic happiness, will scarcely be found to survive.

The wife of a manufacturer, or of a person engaged in any branch of trade productive of considerable gain, is likewise subjected by her own situation and that of her husband to moral duties and trials, which require to be briefly noticed. If her husband has raised himself by success in his business to a state of affluence and credit much superior



to that which he originally possessed, and in particular if he has thus raised himself from very low beginnings: his wife is not unfrequently puffed up with the pride which he is sometimes found to contract during the period of his elevation; looks down with the contemptuous insolence of prosperity on her former acquaintances and friends; frowns into silence the hopes and the requests of poor relations; and would gladly consign to oblivion every circumstance, which calls to mind the condition from which she has been exalted. She becomes ambitious to display her newly acquired wealth in the parade of dress, in costly furniture, in luxurious entertainments. Ever apprehensive of being treated by her late equals or superiors with a less degree of respect than she now conceives to be her due; she perpetually finds, or supposes that she finds, the real or imaginary slight which she is taking such pains to discover. If from the operation of absurd and arrogant prejudices, which, though far less prevalent in modern times than heretofore, are not yet wholly extinguished, she be occasionally treated by ladies of superior rank and fortune with the supercilious airs reserved to be exhibited towards those who have recently emerged into opulence; instead of proving by her conduct that "before honour is humility (*l*)," she fails not to convince them that her pride is equal to their own. Though she may control the effervescence of her wrath, and break not forth into turbulence and outrage; she broods in secret over the affront, and gratifies her malevolence with every thing which truth or falsehood can suggest to the detriment and disparagement of the offending party. The disgracefulness and the guilt of these unchristian tempers appear in the deepest colours of deformity, when contrasted with the behaviour of those women who are seen to retain,

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(*l*) Proverbs, xv. 33.



after the largest accession of riches and consequence, the unassuming manners, the meekness of disposition, the same principles, the same attachments by which they were originally distinguished.

When a large manufactory collects together, as is the case in cotton mills and some other instances, a number of women and children within its walls ; or draws a concourse of poor families into its immediate vicinity, by the employment which it affords to the different parts of them ; let the wife of the owner continually bear in mind that to their toil her opulence is owing. Let her remember that the obligations between the labourer and his employer are reciprocal. With cordial activity let her unite with her husband, in all ways compatible with the offices of her sex, to promote the comfort and welfare of his dependents by liberal charity adapted to their respective wants, and by all other means which personal inspection and inquiry may indicate as conducive to the preservation of their health, and the improvement of their moral and religious character. The assemblage of multitudes is highly unfavourable to virtue. The constant occupations of children in a manufactory may easily be pushed to an extreme, that will leave neither time nor inclination for the acquisition of those principles of christian rectitude, which, if not impressed during childhood are rarely gained afterwards : nor opportunity for the attainment of those arts of female industry, which are essential to the management of a family. If such occupations be carried on in the contaminated atmosphere of crowded rooms, they sap the constitution in the years destined according to the course of nature for its complete establishment. These are evils which every person, who has an interest in a manufactory, is bound by the strongest ties of duty to prevent ; or, if they exist already, to remove.

A similar obligation rests on the wives of tradesmen in general, in proportion to the ability and the opportunities

which they possess of benefiting, in any of the methods which have been pointed out, the families of the workmen employed by their husbands. If a woman have herself the superintendence and management of the shop, let industry, punctuality, accuracy in keeping accounts, honesty shewing itself in a steady and scrupulous abhorrence of every manœuvre to impose on the customer, and all other virtues of a commercial character, which are reducible to practice in her situation, distinguish her conduct (*m*). If her occupation be such as to occasion young women to be placed under her roof as assistants in her business, or for the purpose of acquiring the knowledge of it; let her behave to them with the kindness of a friend, and watch over their principles and moral behaviour with the solicitude of a mother.

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(*m*) It is said, by those who have had sufficient opportunities of ascertaining the fact, to be no unfrequent practice among the wives of several descriptions of shopkeepers in London, knowingly to demand from persons who call to purchase articles for ready money, a price, when the husband is not present, greater than that which he would have asked. This overplus, if the article be bought, the wife conceals, and appropriates to her own use. If the customer demurs at the demand, and the husband chances to enter; the wife professes to have been mistaken, and apologises for the error. Thus detection is avoided. It is scarcely necessary to say, that the whole of the proceedings is gross dishonesty and falsehood on the part of the wife. If the husband have led her into temptation, by withholding from her an equitable supply of money for her proper expences; he also deserves great blame. Does she then attempt to justify herself on this plea? As reasonably might she allege it in defence of forgery.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## ON PARENTAL DUTIES.

OF all the duties incumbent on mankind, there are none which recommend themselves more powerfully to natural reason than those of the parent. The high estimation in which the Scriptures hold them is evident, from a variety of precepts, reflections, allusions, comparisons, and incidents, in the Old and New Testaments. The obligations which rest on the father and the mother, in many points the same, are, in some few respects, different. Thus, for example, the task of making a reasonable provision for the future wants of children belongs, in common cases, to the father. "If any," saith St. Paul, "provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel (*n*);" he disobeys one of the clearest injunctions of Christianity, and omits to discharge an office, which Pagans in general would have been ashamed of neglecting. That these words of the Apostle include parents, is a truth which will not be questioned. They are now quoted not for the sake of inculcating the particular obligation to which they relate, but for the sake of an inference which they furnish. They enable us to conclude, with certainty, what would have been the language of St. Paul, had he been led expressly to deliver his sentiments concerning mothers regardless of maternal duties.

In the former part of this work, when the education of

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(*n*) 1. Tim. v. 8.

young women, and their introduction into general society, were the subjects under discussion ; several of the most important topics of parental duty, being inseparably connected with those subjects, were illustrated and enforced. It remains now to subjoin some detached remarks, which could not hitherto be commodiously stated. Like the preceding they relate to points which will press on the attention of a mother, whether sharing with a husband the duties of a parent, or called by his death to the more arduous office of fulfilling them alone.

The first of the parental duties which nature points out to the mother is to be herself the nurse of her own offspring. In some instances, however, the parent is not endued with the powers of constitution requisite for the discharge of it. In others the discharge of it would be attended with a risk to her own health greater than she ought to encounter when it can be avoided. In every such case the general obligation ceases. The disappointment which will be felt by maternal tenderness, ought to be borne without repining ; and without indulging apprehensions respecting the welfare of the infant, which experience has proved to be needless. But spontaneously to transfer to a stranger, as modern example dictates, the office of nurturing your child, when your health and strength are adequate to the undertaking ; to transfer it, that your indolence may not be disturbed, or that your passion for amusement may not be crippled in its exertions ; is to evince a most shameful degree of selfishness and unnatural insensibility. When affection fails even in this first trial, great reason have we to forbode the absence of that disposition to submit to personal sacrifices, which will be found indispensably necessary to the performance of the subsequent duties of a parent.

Whether a mother be or be not able to rear her offspring at her own breast, conscience and natural feelings unite in directing her to exercise that general superintendence over

the conduct of all the inhabitants of the nursery, which is requisite to preserve her infant from suffering by neglect, by the prejudices of ignorance, or by the immoderate officiousness of care.

When the dawning intellect begins to unfold itself, the office of parental instruction commences. The dispositions of a child are susceptible of very early culture : and much trouble and much unhappiness may be prevented by nipping in the bud the first shoots of caprice, obstinacy, and passion, and by instilling and cherishing amiable sentiments and habits. The twig, however young and tender, may be bent and fashioned by the hand of gentleness. The mind soon learns by habit to expect discipline ; and ere long begins to discipline itself. By degrees the young pupil acquires the capacity of understanding the general reasons of the parent's commands, denials, commendations, and reproofs : and they should be communicated in most cases in which they can be comprehended. Among these reasons, obedience to God, the love of him, and a desire to please him, together with other motives derived from Christianity, should hold the pre-eminence which they deserve ; and should be early presented to the infant mind in strong and attractive colours. Religion is thus engrafted through the divine co-operation into the nature of children soon after their original passions begin to work ; and may be expected to become a more vigorous plant, and to arrive at a more fruitful maturity, than could have been hoped if the commencement of its growth had been delayed to a later period. Thus a child is trained up from the first " in the way in which he should go." And by a continuance of the same care, still in humble dependence on the blessing of God, there is the fairest prospect that " he will keep in it unto the end." To make a right impression on the opening mind, Religion should appear, according to her real character, with an awful and an amiable aspect : liberal of the



most precious gifts, and delighted to confer them; yet resolute to punish, if her offers be slighted and her commands disobeyed. Let parents beware of partial and unfair representations of the will and counsel of God in order to obtain some immediate end. Perhaps we may always discern, that most good is effected by unfolding the entire and unsophisticated truth. But if parents imagine otherwise, God is wiser than man. And they may be certain that the Revelation, which he has vouchsafed for the instruction and salvation of mankind, is far more likely to accomplish the intended object when laid before old and young, rich and poor, in its true colours; than when disguised by man, the better, as he conceives, to answer a present purpose. Kindness to bear with slow and feeble apprehension, freedom from irritability and capriciousness, care to shun involuntary absence of thought, patience not weary of attending to minute objects and minute opportunities, and steadiness never to be won by mere entreaty, nor teased by importunity, from its original right determination, are among the qualifications at all periods, and especially at the period of which we now speak, essential to the parent.

As childhood advances, the opening faculties are employed under maternal direction on the rudiments of knowledge. The parent in these days possesses, in the variety of elementary tracts of modern date, advantages of which when she herself was a child, her preceptress was destitute. The first principles of religion are inculcated in a mode adapted to interest the attention; and information on many other subjects is couched under the form of dialogue and narrative suited to the comprehension and amusing to the imagination of the pupil. A proper selection from the multitude of little publications, differing materially as to intrinsic worth, requires no large portion of time and trouble. Where caution is easy, negligence is in the same proportion



reprehensible. In exercising the child in books which contain a manifest admixture of defective and erroneous observations, (and such is the case with almost every performance,) great care should be taken to represent and explain the subject of them to the child in a proper light. And every opportunity thus afforded of arming the young mind against temptations which it must encounter, and faults which it must avoid in life, should be seized and employed to the utmost advantage.

The time now arrives, when the regular business of education, in all its branches, is to begin; and the great question, whether it shall be conducted at home or abroad, is to be decided. The grounds on which that point is to be determined have been sufficiently discussed already; and the degrees of attention respectively due to each of the various objects, to which youthful application is to be directed, have been explained. It is true that the chapter (o) to which I allude, pertains exclusively to the education of girls. But the general principles there illustrated may be transferred, without difficulty, to the case of boys; and will guide the mother in the part which she bears in settling the plan of their education. To fix that plan is an office which belongs jointly to both parents. But the superior intimacy which the husband possesses with the habits and pursuits of active life, and his superior insight into those attainments which will be necessary or desirable for his sons in the stations which they are to fill, and the professions which they are to practise, will of themselves entitle his judgement to the same preponderance in determining the scheme of their education, as, for similar reasons, he will commonly do well to give to the opinion of his wife with respect to the mode of bringing up his daughters.

If domestic circumstances be such, that the girls are to be sent to a boarding-school, let not the mother be influenced in her choice by the example of high life and fashion ; nor by the practice of her neighbours and acquaintance ; nor by a groundless partiality for the spot where she was herself placed for instruction. Let her habitually fix her view on the objects of prime importance in education ; and give the preference to the seminary where they are most likely to be thoroughly attained. Let not the difficulty of ascertaining the seminary worthy of that description incline her to acquiesce in one which she ought not to approve. Her child's happiness in this world and in futurity is to be deemed at stake. The secondary objects of education may be in a competent degree obtained in almost every place. And what is the importance of these when compared with that of the others ? Be it remembered, that among the parents, who in the hour of reflection neither estimate accomplishments above their true value, nor forget the peculiar temptations attached to eminence in such acquirements, there are some whom the contagion of fashion, and an emulous desire of seeing their children distinguished, lead to a degree of earnestness and anxiety respecting the proficiency of their daughters, which could be justified only if skill in dancing, in music, in French, in Italian, ought to be the prime objects of human solicitude. Let the opportunities which vacations furnish be watchfully turned to good account by supplying that which is defective, by correcting that which is erroneous, by strengthening that which is valuable, in the instruction conveyed and the sentiments inculcated at the school. And let the instructors be encouraged to general exertion, and to the greatest exertion in points of the highest concern, by perceiving that the progress of the pupil in the various branches of improvement is observed with a steady and a discriminating eye.

It can scarcely be necessary to observe that if a daughter

be educated at home, and recourse be had to the assistance of a governess, much conscientious care is requisite in the choice. To meet with a person tolerably qualified as to mental accomplishments, is sometimes not an easy task. But to find the needful accomplishments united with ductility, with a placid temper, and above all with active principles of religion, is a task of no small labour; and a task deserving of the labour which it requires. Let the assistant be ever treated with friendly kindness. But let her be kept attentive to the duties of her office by the superintending vigilance of the parent. And let the parent, now that she is relieved from much of the business of the school-room, be the more assiduous in those maternal occupations, in which the governess will probably afford her less substantial aid, the establishment of her daughter's religious principles, the regulation of her dispositions, and the improvement of her heart.

In the government of children, the principle of fear as well as that of love is to be employed. There are parents, especially mothers, who, from an amiable but extreme apprehension of damping filial attachment by the appearance of severity, are desirous of excluding the operation of the former principle. To work on the youthful mind primarily by means of the latter, and to employ the intervention of fear only in a subordinate degree, is unquestionably the way to conciliate fondness without prejudice to authority. But among imperfect beings, constituted as we are, the maintenance of authority seems ever to require the aid, in a greater or a less degree, of the principle of fear. The supreme Father of the universe sees fit to employ it in the moral government of mankind. On what grounds are we to hope that love should prove sufficient to secure to the parent the obedience of the child, when it is not of itself able to ensure the obedience of the parent to his Maker? In proportion as the spirit of religion gains a stronger predominance in the

human breast, conformity to the laws of God springs less from the impulse of fear, and more and more from the warmth of grateful love. But the imperfections of mortality must be put off, before we can arrive at that state, in which "perfect love" casteth out fear." So likewise, as reason unfolds itself and Christian views open to the mind, the child will stand less and less in need of positive control, and will be more powerfully actuated every year by an affectionate earnestness to gratify the parent's desire. But as long as the rights of parental authority subsist, the impression of awe, originally stamped on the bosom of the offspring, is not to be considered as useless. Children are distinguished from each other by striking differences in the bent of their inclinations, and in the strength of their passions. Fear, therefore, is an instrument more frequently needful in the management of some than in that of others. But it ought never to be employed by itself. Whenever reproof, restraint, or any mode of punishment is requisite; still let affection be visible. Let it be shewn not only by calmness of manner and benevolence of expression, proofs which yet may appear not wholly conclusive to the child at the time when it is experiencing the effects of parental displeasure; but also by studying to convince the understanding of the pupil, both that the censure and the infliction are deserved, and that they are intended solely for the ultimate good of the offender.

Let not maternal love degenerate into partiality. Children are in no respect more quicksighted than in discovering preferences in the behaviour of their parents. It is not partiality in a mother to feel a temporary preference in a case where merit demands it. Nor is it in all cases wrong to avow such a preference, for the purpose of exciting the less deserving to progressive industry and virtue. For that very purpose, and also to preclude the apprehension of real love being impaired, let it be avowed; and let the points to which it extends be affectionately specified to the less deserving as

soon as you perceive the existence of it to be suspected. But beware of teaching your children to vie with each other; for it is to teach them envy and malevolence. Point out, at fit opportunities, to those who have not done their duty the proper conduct of those who have performed it; but proceed no farther. Press no comparison; provoke no competition. An eminent moral writer (*q*), advertng to two opposite but unnecessary evils in the system of education, has emphatically observed; "I would rather have the rod to be the general terror to all to make them learn, than tell a child, If you do thus or thus, you will be more esteemed than your brothers or sisters. By exciting emulation and comparisons of superiority, you lay the foundation of lasting mischief. You make brothers and sisters hate each other." The purpose of leading children to imitate that which is right, and to avoid that which is reprehensible, in the conduct of another, may frequently be answered by taking care duly to deliver praise or censure in the presence of the rest, without addressing the discourse immediately to those, who on account of their faults ought more especially to attend to it. This method, when likely to be efficacious, is generally the most advisable, as pointing least to invidious comparisons; and is particularly eligible in the case of children, whose minds display a particular proneness to envy and malevolence.

If I were required to single out from the failings, which invade the bosom of childhood, that which from the facility with which it is harboured and nurtured, and from its insidious, extensive, and durable effects on the character which it taints, calls for the most watchful attention from parental solicitude; that to which in my apprehension the distinction would be due, is art. Other faults usually disclose themselves by indications visible to common eyes. This is frequently found

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(*q*) Dr. Johnson—See Boswell's Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides, 2d edit. p. 103.



capable of eluding even the glance of penetration; and of concealing not only itself, but almost every other defect of heart and conduct with which it is associated. Other faults in most cases appear what they are. This continually assumes the semblance of virtue. Other faults incommode, thwart, and sometimes contribute to weaken and correct, each other. This confederates and co-operates with all. In the dawn of life it is often encouraged by the lessons instilled by servants, who teach children to disguise from their parents by indirect falsehood petty acts of misconduct and disobedience; and sometimes by the indiscretion of parents themselves, who applaud in a forward child those instances of cunning, which either prove a strong inherent tendency to habits of deliberate artifice, or will easily pave the way for the acquisition of them. Openness in acknowledging improper behaviour of any kind, is a disposition to which a child ought from infancy to be led by the principles both of duty and of affection. To accept spontaneous confession as a satisfaction for every fault would not be to cherish virtue, but to foster guilt by teaching it a ready way to impunity. But an immediate and full avowal ought ever to be admitted as an important circumstance of palliation; and the refusal or neglect of it to be noticed as the addition of a second and a heavy fault to the former.

Parents are sometimes extremely imprudent both in the manner and in the substance of their conversation in the presence of their children. If they feel a sudden impulse to speak of some transaction which they are aware ought not to be divulged; or to give an opinion concerning the character or conduct of an individual, while at the same time they are unwilling that it should transpire; they often appear to forget the acuteness and intelligence which their children have attained. They attempt to obscure the purport of their discourse by whispers, ambiguous phrases, and broken sentences, which serve to excite the young listeners to attention;



teach them to annex importance to the topic of the conversation ; and stimulate them to communicate it in the nursery, partly from an early vanity to shew the knowledge which they have collected, and partly from the desire of having their curiosity gratified with the remainder of the story. Sometimes the subject of the mysterious speeches interchanged between the parents respects the child itself. Fondness cannot refrain from eulogium ; while discretion suggests the consequences of its being heard. It is therefore couched in terms, and darkened by allusions, which the child is seldom at a loss to interpret. Praise, heightened by ineffectual attempts at disguise, excites more vanity and conceit than even the imprudence of open panegyric.

But among the various ways in which the conversation held by parents in the presence of the child has a frequent tendency to injure the dispositions, and lead astray the judgement, of the latter, the most dangerous, perhaps the most common, is yet to be specified. If the situation of an individual of either sex be the subject of discourse ; what are the particulars which are generally singled out as the most eminent sources of satisfaction, as the most obvious grounds on which the person to whom they appertain deserves to be felicitated by every one ? Wealth, personal beauty, fashionable manners, shewy abilities and acquirements, rich or polite connections, the prospect of advancement, of emolument, of power. The virtues of the heart are not always omitted. Sometimes they are even distinguished by an avowed preference. But they are praised in cold language and with a cold countenance : while eager eloquence, animated features, and sparkling eyes, and gestures expressive of heartfelt approbation, perhaps of desire or of envy, denote the relative value practically assigned to the two classes of objects of which we speak. What then are the effects which will be produced on the mind of the youthful auditor ? Their nature, their strength, and their durability no one can doubt. It is necessary to add that the fault

in parents which has here been censured is not to be cured nor to be avoided merely by the exercise of discretion. This is a case in which no degree of discretion will be able to ensure habitual caution and forbearance. The evil is deeply seated in the heart of the parent ; and to purify the heart is the only remedy. Let parents themselves learn to prize at the highest rate those things which are of the greatest intrinsic worth ; and then, and then only, will their conversation be such as not to ensnare their children into a false estimation of objects, which comparatively have little or no real value.

During the years when both the body and the mind are to acquire the firmness which will be essential to each in the struggles and temptations of life, let not your offspring be enfeebled and corrupted by habits of effeminate indulgence. Let them be accustomed to plain food, simple clothing, early and regular hours ; to abundant exercise in the open air ; and to as little regard of the vicissitudes of seasons as is consistent with reasonable attention to health. Let them be guarded against indulging timidity ; and more especially against affected apprehensions, to which girls are frequently prone. Let humanity and mildness be among the principles impressed most early on their hearts. Let not the impression be permitted to grow faint ; and in common with all just and amiable impressions, let it be strengthened by the hand of religion. Teach them to abhor the detestable sports derived from the sufferings of animals. They who are inured in their childhood to persecute the bird or torture the insect, will have hearts, in maturer years, prepared for barbarity to their fellow-creatures. Allow not your rising family to contract pernicious intimacies with servants. But exact in their behaviour to your domestics a deportment invariably gentle and unassuming. Point out the impending hour, when all distinctions of rank will be at an end ; when the important question to each individual

will not be, What station in life have you occupied? but, How have you discharged the duties of that which you were appointed to fill?

It is an object of no small importance, when the business of domestic education verges towards a close, to proceed in such a manner that the shackles of instruction may drop off by degrees; until at length the steady application ever requisite will probably be continued, when no longer exacted, from habit and choice. Few circumstances can be more dangerous, than for a young woman, by begin abruptly withdrawn from a state of pupillage, to have a large portion of vacant time suddenly thrown upon her hands, and to be left to fill the chasm with trifles and dissipation. Study to lead your daughter to supply the place of the employments from which she is gradually exonerated, by others better suited to her years, and if more pleasant, yet not less improving, than those to which they succeed.

When your children approach to that period at which they are to be introduced into general society; be it your care to cherish the ingenuous openness, which by habitual openness on your part and every other proper method your previous conduct has been calculated, or ought to have been calculated, to inspire. Antecedently to the Reformation, when young women were removed to their own homes from the monasteries, in those days the seminaries of education, in which they were instructed in writing, drawing, confectionary, needlework, and also in physic and surgery, then estimated as female accomplishments; they were treated in a manner calculated to preclude confidence and friendship between them and their parents. "Domestic manners," we are told (*r*), "were severe and formal. A haughty reserve was affected by the old; and an abject

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(*r*) Henry's History of England, vol. vi. p. 648, 649

“deference exacted from the young.—Daughters, though  
“women, were placed like statues at the cupboard; and  
“not permitted to sit, or repose themselves otherwise than  
“by kneeling on a cushion, until their mother departed.  
“Omissions were punished by stripes and blows: and  
“chastisement was carried to such excess, that daughters  
“trembled at the sight of their mother.” Even in times  
not very distant from those in which we live, it was the  
custom for girls, when arrived at such an age as to be fully  
capable of bearing a part in general conversation, to be  
condemned to almost perpetual silence in the presence of  
their parents. To guard children, whatever be their age,  
against a premature and forward assumption of woman-  
hood, and against acquiring a habit of pert or inconsiderate  
loquacity, is a branch of parental duty. But to encourage  
your daughters, and so much the more as they approach  
nearer to the time of life when they must act for themselves,  
to an unaffected ease in conversation before you, and a  
familiar interchange of sentiment with you, is among the  
least uncertain methods of rendering your society pleasing  
and instructive.

Though time and judgement have sobered the excess of  
warmth and of sensibility by which your feelings, when you  
began first to be introduced into the world, were, like those  
of other young people, characterised; let it however be ap-  
parent to your children, when at the period of life now  
under consideration, that you have not forgotten what they  
were. To the welfare of your daughters in particular this  
is a point of the highest concern. Unless it be evident that  
you understand and frankly enter into the emotions, which  
new scenes and new temptations excite in their minds;  
how will it be practicable for you to correct the miscon-  
ceptions, dispel the delusions, and unravel the artifices, by  
which the fervour and inexperience of youth are ensnared?  
If you encounter errors occasioned or increased by sensibi-

lity with austere coldness, with vehement chidings, or with unbending authority that disdains to assign reasons, and to make allowance for circumstances of mitigation ; you destroy your own influence, and produce not conviction. Your disapprobation is ascribed to prejudice, to temper, to deadness of feeling. You are obeyed ; but it is with inward reluctance, and with an augmented proneness to the step which you have forbidden. Confidence, withdrawn from yourself, is transferred to companions of the same age with your child, and therefore liable to the same mistakes and the same faults. Coincidence of ideas rivets her opinion of their judgement ; friendship blinds her to their misconduct. She is thus in a great measure removed from your hands into the hands of others, who are not likely to be qualified for the office of guiding her, and may be in various respects such as are likely to guide her amiss. Her love for you may possibly not be radically shaken ; but her respect for your determinations, her solicitude to have her own sentiments confirmed and sanctioned by your concurrence, her distrust of her own views of characters and proceedings when contrary to your opinion, are universally impaired. Study then during the childhood of your daughter, study even with greater anxiety as her youth advances, to train her in the habit of regarding you not as a parent only, but as a friend. Fear not, when she enters into the temptations of the world, to point out with unrestrained sincerity the dangers in which novelty, and youthful passions, and fashionable example, involve her. If you point them out not fully and assiduously, you abandon the duty of a parent. But to preserve the confidence of a friend, point them out with affectionate benignity, mindful of the hazards to which you were yourself exposed under similar circumstances, at a similar period of youth. It is thus that you may hope effectually to screen your daughter from modish folly and dissipation, from indiscreet intimacies and dangerous connections. It is



thus that you may engage her to avail herself of the advantage of your experience ; and render to her, by your counsel, the most signal benefits both in the general intercourse of society, and particularly when she meditates on any prospect which may be opened to her of settling in connubial life.

There is a medium which is not always easy to be observed, with respect to daughters being allowed to accept invitations to pass some time in other families. Such intercourse on proper occasions is improving as well as pleasant. But if a young woman is accustomed to be frequently absent from home, roving from house to house, and accumulating visit upon visit ; she is in no small danger of acquiring an unsettled and dissipated spirit ; of becoming dissatisfied with the calm occupations and enjoyments of the family fireside ; and even of losing some portion of the warm affection which she felt for her parents and near relations, while she was in the habit of placing her chief delight in their society. If the parent would guard her daughters from all propensity to this extreme, let her aid the sobriety of disposition and sedateness of character, already instilled into them, by the charms of never-failing and affectionate good humour on her own part, which are essential to the comfort of domestic life, and particularly attractive in the eye of youth. There are fashionable mothers who, at the same time that they introduce their daughters into a general and free acquaintance with others of their age, sex, and station, carefully instil into them the prudential maxim, to contract friendship with none. The scheme either fails to succeed, or breeds up a character of determined selfishness. Let the parent encourage her daughters in friendly attachment to young women, in whom amiable manners and virtuous principles are exemplified. With the society of such friends let her willingly gratify them ; sometimes abroad, more frequently under her own roof. But let her not consent to their residence in families where they will be conversant



with ensnaring company of either sex; where boldness of demeanour will be communicated by example, an extravagant fondness for amusements inspired, habits of serious reflection discouraged, and the rational employment of time disregarded. Let her not be flattered by the solicitations, imprudent, however well intended, of ladies of superior rank, desirous to introduce her daughters into circles in which, according to their present place in the scale of society, they are not destined to move. If ambition be once kindled by introduction into a higher sphere; is it likely that it will descend contentedly from its elevation? Is it likely that the modest retirement of private life will remain as engaging as before?

It is a common remark, that sisters generally love their brothers more warmly than each other. If the fact be admitted, it must be acknowledged, I apprehend, to have been rightly ascribed to competition. Brothers can scarcely ever be engaged in the pursuit of an object, which can excite rivalry on the part of a sister. It is seldom indeed that they are rivals to each other. When they enter into active life, they are immediately distributed into different professions and situations. One is a clergyman, another pursues physic, a third studies law, a fourth becomes a merchant. One resides in a country village, another in a provincial town, another in the capital, another in a sea-port. They may forward each other; but they cannot clash. They move on in parallel lines; some with greater, some with less celerity, but cross not each other's course. Whereas sisters, both while they continue in the paternal mansion, and afterwards when settled in marriage, are frequently drawn into competitions by the shewy trifles and follies on which the female mind is too apt to dote. And whenever they begin to enter into competition, mutual affection instantly cools. A mother, in confirming her children in reciprocal love, ought uniformly to bear in mind this distinction.

There is scarcely any circumstance by which the sober judgement and the fixed principles of parents are so frequently perverted, as by a scheming eagerness respecting the settlement of their daughters in marriage. That a daughter should be settled in marriage is a point on which parents, who would not take an improper step to promote it, are seen too earnestly to fix their heart. They do not sufficiently reflect that the great object, which both old and young ought to have in view through life, is, to do their duty, as in the sight of God, in the situation in which they are actually placed, without being too solicitous to change it. In proportion as the mind of a young woman is likely to lean with too strong a bias towards matrimony, the more carefully ought a parent to guard against augmenting the delusion. Yet not only is this truth very frequently disregarded, but absurd and unjustifiable activity is employed to effect matrimonial establishments. A mother, who has personally experienced how slight the connection is between connubial happiness and the worldly advantages of wealth and grandeur, is often seen training her children in the very paths which she has found rugged and strewn with thorns. The opinions, the passions, which, having smothered, she imagined that she had extinguished, shew themselves to be alive. She takes pains to deceive herself, to devise apologies to her own conscience for indulging in the case of her children the spirit of vanity and the anxiety for pre-eminence, which on every other occasion she has long and loudly condemned. She magnifies in fancy the power of doing good, the command of temporal enjoyments, all the advantages, comforts, and gratifications which rank and opulence confer; diminishes in the same proportion the temptations and the drawbacks with which they are accompanied; and discovers reasons which would render them peculiarly trifling in the present instance. Has she herself been unhappy, notwithstanding the possession of riches and

honours? She ascribes her misfortune to accidental causes, from the effect of most, if not all, of which she assures herself that her daughter may easily be secured. Her husband's temper unexpectedly proved indifferent: she herself had unforeseen bad health, and partly through want of care: the neighbourhood unluckily was more unfriendly and disrespectful than could have been apprehended: opportunities of doing good happened to be uncommonly rare, and generally occurred at times when it chanced not to be thoroughly convenient to embrace them: and various other singular and unaccountable circumstances, the existence of which she perfectly remembers, though she does not at present recollect the particulars, all conspired to prevent her from enjoying the happiness naturally belonging to her situation. Her daughter, however, may be more provident, and assuredly will be more fortunate. Satisfied with this explanation, she studies the means of throwing her daughter into the way of young men of station more or less superior to her own. And while she continues to persuade herself, that religious principles and a worthy character are the grand objects to which she attends in the future husband of her child; she is prepared to admit with respect to each of those particulars a considerable deduction from the standard which she professes to have fixed, when compensated by a title, or the addition of a thousand pounds in the rent-roll. Public places now present themselves to her mind as the scenes where her wishes may have the fairest prospect of being realized. She enlarges to her husband on the propriety of doing justice to their daughter's attractions, and giving her the same chance which other ladies of her age enjoy of making a respectable conquest; dwells on the wonderful effect of a sudden impressions; recounts various examples in which wealthy baronets and the eldest sons of peers have been captivated by the resistless power of female elegance in a ball-room, and forgets or passes over the

wretchedness by which the marriage was in most instances succeeded; and drags him, unconvinced, from London to Bath, from Tunbridge to Weymouth, that the young woman may be corrupted into dissipation, folly, and misconduct, and exposed, as in a public market, to the inspection of bachelors of fashion. It would scarcely be practicable to invent a system more indelicate to the feelings of the person for whose benefit it is professedly carried on; nor one whose effect, considered in a matrimonial point of view, would have a greater tendency to betray her into a hasty engagement, and the unhappiness which a hasty engagement usually forbodes. But in this plan, as in others, cunning not seldom over-reaches itself. The jealousy of other mothers suspects the scheme; the quicksightedness of young men discerns it. When once it is discerned, its consequences are wholly opposite to those which it was intended to produce. The destined captive recoils from the net. The odium of the plot, instead of being confined, as justice commonly requires, to the mother, is extended to the daughter, and pursues her whithersoever she goes. In the intercourse of private families in the country, where similar schemes are not unfrequent, though conducted on a smaller scale; the forward advances and studied attentions of the mother to young men of fortune whom she wishes to call her sons-in-law, are often in the highest degree distressing to her daughters as well as offensive to the other parties: and in many cases may actually prevent attachments, which would otherwise have taken place.

The adjustment of pecuniary transactions antecedent to marriages commonly belongs to the fathers of the young people, rather than to maternal care. But the opinion of the mother will, of course, have its weight. Let that weight ever be employed to counteract the operation of sordid principles: and to promote the arrangement of all subordinate points on such a basis as may promise permanence to

the reciprocal happiness of the two families, which are about to be connected.

When matrimonial alliances introduce a mother to new sons and new daughters ; let her study to conduct herself towards them in a manner befitting the ties of affinity, by which she is now united to them. If she harbour prejudices against them, if pride, jealousy, caprice, or any other unwarrantable emotion mark her behaviour towards them ; the injustice of her conduct to the individuals themselves hath this weighty accession of criminality, that it also wounds in the tenderest points the feelings of her own children.

The peculiar obligations of parent and child are not wholly cancelled but by the stroke which separates the bands of mortality. When years may have put a period to authority and submission ; parental solicitude, filial reverence, and mutual affection survive. Let the mother exert herself during her life to draw closer and closer the links of benevolence and kindness. Let her counsel, never obtrusively offered or pressed, be at all times ready when it will be beneficial and acceptable. But let her not be dissatisfied, though the proceedings which she recommends should not appear the most advisable to her children, who are now free agents. Let her share in their joy, and sympathise with their afflictions ; “ rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with “ them that weep (*s*).” She may then justly hope that their love will never forget what she has done and what she has suffered for them ; and that the hand of filial gratitude will delight to smoothe the path of her latter days.

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(*s*) Romans, xii. 15.



## CHAPTER XV.

FURTHER REMARKS ON THE DUTIES BELONGING TO THE  
MIDDLE PERIOD OF LIFE.

AMONG the duties appertaining to the female sex in the middle period of life, those which are peculiar to the wife and to the mother hold the principal rank, and form the largest proportion. They have already been diseussed at sufficient length. It may not, however, be unprofitable to subjoin some additional remarks, partly referring to the conduct of married women during that period, and partly to the situation of individuals, who have remained single.

So engaging are the attractions, so impressive is the force of beauty, that women distinguished by superiority of personal appearance are not permitted long to continue unconscious of being the objects of general attention. Admired and flattered, pursued with assiduities, singled out from their associates at every scene of public resort, they perceive themselves universally welcomed with marked and peculiar preference. To those in whom harmony of form and brilliancy of complexion are not conspicuous, youth itself, graced with unaffected simplicity, or at least rendered interesting by sprightliness and animation, is capable of ensuring no inconsiderable portion of regard. As youth and beauty wear away, the homage which had been paid to them is gradually withdrawn. They who had heretofore been treated as the idols of public and private circles, and had forgotten to anticipate the termination of their empire, are at length awakened from their dream, and constrained to rest satisfied with the common notice shewn to their station, and the respect which they may have acquired by their virtues. To descend from eminence is painful; and

to many minds not the less painful, when the eminence itself had no real value, and the foundation, on which it rested, no durable solidity. She who is mortified by the loss or diminution of those superficial observances which her personal attractions had sometimes induced admiration to render; and had more frequently drawn from curiosity, or vanity, or politeness, while she blindly gave admiration credit for the whole; has not known or has disregarded the only qualities and endowments, which secure genuine esteem, and confer attractions worthy of being prized. Yet, scarcely any spectacle is more common in the haunts of polite life, than to behold a woman in the wane of beauty courting with unremitting perseverance the honours which she can no longer command; exercising her ingenuity in laying traps for compliment and encomium; shutting her eyes against those alterations in her own countenance and figure, which are visible to every other person on the slightest glance; supplying by numberless artifices, and expedients perpetually changing, the odious depredations of time; swelling with envious indignation at the sight of her juniors enjoying in their day the notice once paid to herself; unwilling to permit her daughters to accompany her into public, lest their native bloom should expose by contrast the purchased complexion of their mother, or their very stature betray that she can no longer be young; and disgracing herself, and disgusting even those who deem it civility to flatter and deceive her, by affecting the flippancy of manners, for which youth itself would have been a most inadequate apology.

Among ladies, who have fully arrived at the period of age of which we now speak, there are to be found many who, in consequence of having been early taught by a rational and religious education to fix their minds on proper objects, have escaped even from their first introduction into the world the dazzling influence of those allurements, which fascinate the

greater part of their sex ; or have learned from reflection and experience in the progress of a changeful life to rate them according to their proper value. Of those, however, to whom the one or the other of these descriptions is applicable, there are some, who in their conversation and intercourse with young persons of their own sex contribute to establish in others the errors which they have themselves been happy enough to avoid. Impelled by the desire of rendering themselves agreeable to their youthful associates ; a desire commendable in itself, but reprehensible when in practice it becomes the cause of indiscretion ; they endeavour to suit their discourse to the taste of their hearers by confining it to the subjects of dress, personal appearance, public amusements, and other similar topics ; and by expatiating upon each of these subjects in a manner from which their opinion respecting it might reasonably be inferred to be very different from their actual sentiments. Not that they are austere to turn away from lighter themes of conversation ; or to consider a total abstinence from innocent trifling as one of the essential characteristics of wisdom and of virtue. But it is one thing to be austere, and another to be prudent and discriminating. There is an extreme on the side of complaisance and accommodation. And good humour is carried to excess, when it excites misconceptions ; rivets mistakes ; sanctions ensnaring customs ; and prohibits experience from intermixing, amidst the effusions of cheerfulness and benevolence the voice of seasonable instruction.

The first obligation incumbent on every individual is habitually to act aright in the sphere of personal duty : the next, to encourage, and, in proportion to existing ability and opportunity, to instruct others to do the same. St. Paul, in his directions to Titus (*t*), respecting the admonitions to be delivered by the latter to elderly women, attends to this

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(*t*) Titus, ii. 1. 5.

distinction. "Speak thou the things which become sound doctrine—that the aged women likewise be in behaviour "as becometh holiness, not false accusers;" not guilty of calumny and slander. Having subjoined to these injunctions respecting their personal conduct another which, it may be hoped, is in the present times less frequently applicable in our own country than it seems to have been in Crete (*u*) in the days of the Apostle, "that they be not "given to much wine;" he extends his view to the duties which they owe to the younger part of their own sex. He directs that they be "teachers of good things; that they "may teach the young women to be sober," (characterised by prudence and moderation,) "to love their husbands, to "love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, "good," (of kind tempers,) "obedient to their own husbands; that the word of God be not blasphemed." The obligation of imparting instruction to young women presses on those who are farther advanced in life with the greater force and urgency in proportion to the closeness of the ties, whether of consanguinity or of friendship, by which the latter are connected with the former; and also to the circumstances of disposition, and of time and place, and to various other particulars, which may give to the admonition a more or less favourable prospect of success. Let it not however be imagined that it binds you to consult the improvement of your daughter only and your niece, or of some individual specially thrown under your immediate superintendence. It binds you to consult the improvement of all whom it is in your power to improve, whether connected with you more or less intimately; whether your superiors, your equals, or your inferiors; whether likely to derive a higher or a lower

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(*u*) Where Titus was resident when St. Paul addressed this Epistle to him.—See Chap. 1. 5—12, 13.

degree of advantage from your endeavours. It binds you to consult their improvement by deliberate advice, by incidental reflection, by silent example; by studiously selecting, varying and combining the means which you employ according to the character and situation of the person whom you desire to benefit. It binds you to do all with earnestness and prudence; with sincerity and benevolence. It binds you to beware, lest by negligence you lose opportunities which you might with propriety have embraced; or through inadvertence and mistaken politeness contribute to strengthen sentiments and practices, to which, if you are at the time unable to oppose effectual resistance, you ought at least not to have given the apparent sanction of your authority.

The good sense and the refinement of the present age have abated much of the contempt, with which it was heretofore the practice to regard women, who had attained or past the middle period of life without having entered into the bands of marriage. The contempt was unjust; and it was ungenerous. Why was it ever deemed to be merited? Because the objects of it were remaining in a state of singlehood? Perhaps that very circumstance might be entitled in a large majority of instances to praise and admiration. So various are the motives which men in general permit to have considerable influence on their views in marriage; so different are the opinions of different individuals of that sex as to personal appearance and manners in the other; that of the women who pass through life without entering into a connubial engagement, there are, probably, very few who have not had, earlier or later, the option of contracting it. If then, from a wise and delicate reluctance to accept offers made by persons of objectionable or of ambiguous character; from unwillingness to leave the abode of a desolate parent, struggling with difficulties, or declining towards the grave; from a repugnance



to marriage produced by affection surviving the loss of a beloved object prematurely snatched away by death ; if, in consequence of any of these or of similar causes a woman continue single, is she to be despised ? Let it be admitted that there are some individuals, who, by manifest ill-temper, or by other repulsive parts of their character, have even from their youth precluded themselves from the chance of receiving matrimonial proposals. Is this a reason for branding unmarried women of a middle age with a general stigma ? Be it admitted that certain peculiarities of deportment, certain faults of disposition, which though they ought studiously to be shunned and corrected, it is not necessary here to recite, are proverbially frequent in women, who have long remained single. Let it then also be remembered that every situation of life has a tendency to encourage some particular errors and failings ; that the defects of women, who, by choice or by necessity, are in a situation extremely different from that in which the generality of their sex is placed, will always attract more than their proportion I share of attention ; and that whenever attention is directed towards them, it is no more than common justice at the same time to render signal praise to the individuals, who are free from the faults in manners and temper, which many under similar circumstances have contracted. Let it also be observed, that in the situation of the persons in question there are peculiarities, the recollection of which will produce in a generous mind impressions very different from scorn. They are persons cut off from a state of life usually regarded as the most desirable. They are frequently unprovided with friends, on whose advice or assistance they can thoroughly confide. Sometimes they are destitute of a settled home ; and compelled by a scanty income to depend on the protection, and bear the humours, of supercilious relations. Sometimes in obscure retreats, solitary, and among strangers, they wear away the hours of sickness

and of age, unfurnished with the means of procuring the assistance and the comforts which sinking health demands. Let not unfeeling derision be added to the difficulties, which it has perhaps been impossible to avoid, or virtue not to decline.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### ON THE DUTIES OF THE DECLINE OF LIFE. — CONCLUSION.

THE course of our enquiry now conducts us to the period, when gray hairs and augmenting infirmities forebode with louder and louder admonition the common termination of mortality. The spring and summer of life are past; autumn is far advanced; the frown of winter is already felt. Age has its privileges and its honours. It claims exemption from the more arduous offices of society, to which its strength is no longer equal; and immunity from some at least of the exertions, the fruit of which it cannot enjoy. Deprived of many active pleasures, it claims an equivalent of ease and repose. Forced to contract the sphere of its utility, it claims a grateful remembrance of former services. From the child and the near relation, it claims duty and love: from all, tenderness and respect. Its claims are just, acceptable, and sacred. Reason approves them; sympathy welcomes them; Revelation sanctions them. “Let children requite their parents (x).” “Despise not thy mother when she is old (y).” “Intreat the elder women as mothers (z).”

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(x) 1 Tim. v. 4. (y) Prov. xxiii. 22. (z) 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2.

“Ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder (a).” “Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head (b).” But if age would be regarded with affection and reverence; it must shew itself invested with the qualities by which those feelings are to be conciliated. It must be useful according to its ability, by example, if not by exertion. If unable to continue the full exercise of active virtues, it must display the excellence of those which are passive. It must resist the temptations by which it is beset, and guard itself against indulging faults on the plea of infirmity. In a word, if the “hoary head” is to be “a crown of glory,” it must be “found in the way of righteousness (c).”

Of all the methods by which a woman arrived at old age may preclude herself from enjoying the respect to which even by her years alone she would have been entitled, an attachment to the gay amusements of youth is perhaps the least uncertain. To behold one whose countenance, whose figure, whose every gesture proclaims that the last sands of life are running out, clinging to the levities of a world which she is about to leave for ever; haunting with tottering steps the scene of public entertainment; and labouring with sickly efforts, to win attention by the affectation of juvenile sprightliness and ease: to behold grey hairs thus spontaneously degraded and debased, is not only one of the most disgusting, but one of the most melancholy spectacles which can be surveyed.

Avarice is one of the vices of age, which is more frequently exemplified among men than in the female sex. The causes of the difference may easily be explained. The attention of men in general is more or less directed by the circumstances of their condition to the accumulation of

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(a) 1 Peter, v. 5. (b) Levit. xxi. 32. (c) Prov. xvi. 31.

money. In the case of those who pursue lucrative professions, or commerce, or any other employment of which gain is the object, the fact is manifest. It is scarcely less apparent in the case of noblemen and private gentlemen, who live upon the incomes of their estates. A reasonable desire of providing fortunes for their younger children, without leaving an immoderate burthen on the patrimonial inheritance, commonly disposes them to study at least, if not to accomplish, plans of annual saving. From these cares and occupations women, whether married or unmarried, are comparatively free. In the next place, their native stock of benevolence and liberality is often less impaired than that of the other sex, accustomed in the active business of life to the continual sight and knowledge of fraud, selfishness, and demerit. Hence, when advancing years bring in their train timidity, suspicion, an high opinion of the power of wealth to command respect, or any other feeling or persuasion which is adapted to excite or to confirm a propensity to avarice; that propensity finds in the antecedent pursuits and habits and sentiments of men, encouragements and supports which among individuals of the female sex it experiences in a less degree, or not at all. Among the aged, however, of the female sex, there are examples of covetousness sufficient to authorise a deliberate admonition against it.

A deficiency in tender concern for the interests of others is occasionally perceptible in the aged. Of the ties which united them to the world, many are broken. The honours, the pursuits, the profits, even the temporary happiness and misfortunes of individuals, may well appear to them in the light in which they ought to be seen by every individual of the human race, as trifles when contrasted with eternity. The sensations too become blunted: and the inertness of the body weighs down the activity of the mind. Hence the liveliness and warmth of benevolence are sometimes

impaired. To preserve them undiminished in the midst of infirmity and pain, and while personal connection with mortal events is daily becoming looser and looser, is one of the noblest and most endearing exertions of old age.

Affectionate tendencies, however, in the bosoms of the old proceed, in some instances, to an extreme; and require, though not to be checked, yet to be regulated. Fondness attaches itself with pernicious eagerness to one of the children of the family; rests not without the presence of the favourite object; destroys its health by pampering it with dainties; and stimulates and strengthens its passions by immoderate and indiscriminate gratification. Many a child, whom parental discipline would have trained in the paths of knowledge and virtue, has been nursed up in ignorance and prepared for vice by the blind indulgence of the grandmother and the aunt. Unwillingness to thwart the wishes of old age, curtailed of many enjoyments, and impatient of contradiction, frequently restrains the parent from timely and effectual interference. Were this obvious circumstance considered beforehand, and with due seriousness, by women advanced in years; they would less frequently reduce those with whom they live to the embarrassing dilemma of performing a very irksome duty, or of acquiescing in the danger and detriment, perhaps in the ruin, of their offspring.

Among the defects of old age, querulousness is esteemed one of the most prominent. Complaint is the natural voice of suffering; and to suffer is the common lot of declining years. Even in the earlier periods of life, women of weak health and irritable spirits not seldom contract a habit of complaining; and though when called to severe trials, they may disclose exemplary patience, yet they indulge in common life a frequent recurrence of the tones and language of querulousness. The inward trouble seems ever on the watch for opportunities of revealing itself; and any little mark of regard, any expression of tenderness, from a hus-



band or a brother, immediately calls forth the intimation of an ailment. In age, when the affection of children and near relations rightly distinguishes itself by particular assiduity and solicitude ; when, if the hand of Providence withhold acuteness of pain, some degree of infirmity and suffering is mercifully allowed to give almost constant admonitions of an event which cannot be remote ; when garrulity, no longer employed on the variety of subjects which once interested the mind, dwells with augmented eagerness on present objects and present sensations ; it is not surprising that a disposition to complaint should gather strength. But let all who suffer remember, that it is not by continual lamentation that the largest measure of compassion is to be obtained. Reiterated impressions lose their force. The ear becomes dull to sounds to which it is habituated. A part of the uneasinesses described by the sufferer is attributed to imagination ; and the mind of the hearer, instead of estimating the amount of the remainder, wonders and regrets that they are not born better. Among the strongest supports of pity is the involuntary reverence commanded by silent resignation.

Another of the unfavourable characteristics by which age is sometimes distinguished, is a peevish and dissatisfied temper. To those who are conversant with a narrow circle of objects, trifles swell into importance. Small disappointments are permitted to assume the form of serious evils ; inadvertence and unintentional omissions are construed into positive unkindness. Novelties of every sort disgust ; and every little variation is a novelty. All things appear to have changed, and to have changed for the worse. Manners are no longer simple, as they were once ; fashions are not rational and elegant, as heretofore ; youth is become noisy, petulant, and irreverent to its seniors ; rank and station are no longer treated with respect. Moral virtue has diminished : tradesmen have lost their honesty, servants their ready and

punctual obedience. Even in personal appearance the rising generation is far inferior to the last. The very course, and aspect, and energy of nature sympathise in the general transformation. The seasons are no longer regular and genial: the verdure of the fields is impaired: flowers have lost their odours, fruits their relish. Such are the suspicions prone to irritate the bosoms of the old; such the repinings which too often dwell upon their lips. To tolerate, to pity this waywardness is the office of the young; to guard against indulging it is the duty of the aged. Let the former anticipate the hour in which they too, should they survive, will be tempted blindly to attribute to every surrounding object the decay which has taken place in their own faculties alone. Let the latter recall to mind the sensations with which they themselves, in the prime of life, witnessed similar misconceptions, and listened to similar complaints.

If age have its peculiar burthens, it has also, when crowned with piety, its peculiar consolations. The fervid passions which agitated the breast of youth have subsided: the vanities which dazzled its gaze have ceased to delude. Cheerful hours, enlivened by the society of descendents, of relations, perhaps of some coeval friend endeared by the recollection of long established regard, still remain. If maladies press heavily on the functions of life, if pain embitter the remnant of your satisfactions; yet the duration of your sufferings cannot be long. If the day be far spent, the hour of rest must necessarily be at hand. The young, when overtaken with calamities corresponding to those which you endure, know not but that, according to the settled order of human events, a long period of sorrow and anguish may await them. From all such distresses you will shortly be at peace. Whether your waning years be loaded with affliction, or glide away placid and serene; have you not still in your possession the chief of earthly blessings, the promises of the Gospel, the prospect of

immortality? If those promises, that prospect, be not adapted to give you comfort, lay not your disquiet to the charge of age; charge it on your past life, on your own folly, on your own sin; and labour ere the day of grace be past, ere the portentous shades of death and misery close around you, to make even yet your peace with God through the mediation of an atoning Saviour. But if you have so lived as to have an interest in the glorious hopes of Christianity; how peculiarly strong may be your delight in looking forward to rewards, from which you are separated by so brief an interval!

Endear then yourself to all around you by cheerful good-humour, by benevolence, by affectionate kindness, by devout patience and resignation. By seasonable exhortation, by uniform example, endear to them that piety which is your support. Engage them to a continual remembrance of the hour, when they shall be as you are. So shall your memory speak the language of instruction and of comfort, when you are silent in the grave.

In youth and in age, in single and in matrimonial life, in all circumstances and under all relations, to live stedfastly and habitually under the guidance of those principles which they who are now lying on the bed of death are rejoicing that they have obeyed, or mourning that they have disregarded, is the sum of human wisdom and human happiness. "The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (*d*)."  
 "God loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins (*e*)"—  
 "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood (*f*)."  
 "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that

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(*d*) 2 Peter, iii. 9. (*e*) 1 John, iv. 10. (*f*) Rom. iii. 25.

“ask Him (g)?” “The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding (h).” “He that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile. Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil (i).” “The righteous shall be recompensed in the earth—the righteous hath hope in his death (k).” “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments (l).” “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved (m).” You may disbelieve Christianity: but its truth is not on that account impaired. You may slight the impending day of retribution; but its approach is not on that account retarded. “The Lord hath purposed; and who shall disannul it?” “I am God, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done; saying, My Counsel shall stand (n).” What if Christianity had commanded you wholly to refrain even from reasonable pleasures and moderate indulgences? Would you have murmured at temporary forbearance when compared with an eternal reward? Christianity however imposes no such restriction. Even in this respect its “yoke is easy,” and its “burthen is light;” easy and light to all, who are disposed to pursue the course which they perceive to be their duty. It prohibits you from no pleasures except those which, had Christianity never been revealed, your own reason, if unbiassed, would have condemned. It restrains you from no innocent gratifications, except when

(g) Luke, ii. 13.

(h) Job, xxviii. 28.

(i) 1 Peter, iii. 10—12.

(k) Prov. xi. 31—xiv. 32.

(l) Matt. xix. 17.

(m) Acts, xvi. 31.

(n) Isaiah, xiv. 27.—xlvi. 9. 10.

they would be unseasonable or excessive ; when by preventing you from discharging some present duty, or rendering you less qualified for the discharge of duty at a future period, they would diminish your everlasting recompense. Be it however remembered, that they who, in deciding whether they should or should not adopt a life of religion, bring into the argument any calculations as to the amount of present pleasures to be sacrificed, are as little acquainted with the dictates of sober reason, as with the spirit of Christian repentance and conversion. If your days be crowned with worldly blessings, if you have competence and health, if you be happy in your parents, your connections, your children ; what solid delight could you feel in the contemplation of your felicity, did you know no more than that every object whence it is derived is together with yourself descending with ceaseless rapidity to the abyss of death ? How would you have borne to stand on the brink of the gulph, gazing across in vain for an opposite shore, and looking down into unfathomable vacuity ; if Religion had not unfolded to you the secrets of another world, and instructed you how to attain its never ending glories ? But your comforts perhaps are undermined by sickness or misfortune, and your prospects darkened by grief. Religion can blunt the arrows of pain, and brighten the gloom of calamity and sorrow. It teaches you the moral and sanctifying purposes for which affliction and chastisement are mercifully sent. It teaches you that “ by the sadness of “ the countenance the heart is made better (o).” Are your parents unnatural ; or are they no more ? It tells you that you have an Almighty and all bounteous Father in Heaven. Is your husband unkind ? It teaches you to win him by your modest virtues ; and gives you a solemn assurance

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(o) Eccl. vii. 3.



that Christian patience shall not lose its reward. Are you deprived by death of a beloved partner in marriage? It represents to you the Ruler of the Universe as the especial protector of the widow and the orphan. Are your offspring taken from you in their early childhood? It tells you that "of such is the kingdom of God (*p*)."<sup>1</sup> Are they snatched away in riper years? It reminds you that they are removed from trials which they might not have withstood. Were their talents more than usually promising? It tells you that those talents might have proved the sources of ruinous temptations. Whether you have lost parent, husband, or child, it tells you that "them which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him (*q*)."<sup>2</sup> It tells you that the means of securing to yourself a participation of the unchangeable happiness, destined for those who have been faithful servants of Christ, are offered to you by the grace of God, are placed within your reach, are pressed upon your notice and acceptance. Religion at times speaks to you the language of terror. It sets before you threatnings as conspicuously as promises. It insists not more strongly on the comforts and rewards assigned to holiness here and hereafter, than on the certain misery attendant on unrighteousness. It dwells not more emphatically on the wisdom and security of those, who cleave unto God with full purpose of heart, than on the self delusion and extreme danger of all those, from the obstinately trifling to the obdurate sinner, who in different degrees fall short of that scriptural standard; and do not so love their Maker "with all their hearts, and with all their minds, and with all their souls, and with all their strength," as to suffer no pleasure, no interest, no worldly object whatever, to hold the place in their thoughts and affections, which is due to the love and the service of God.

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(*p*) Mark. x. 14.

(*q*) 1 Thes. iv. 14.

It tells of "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, "upon every soul of man that doeth evil;" of the place of darkness and torment, where the worm dieth not, and the fire "is never quenched;" as plainly as of the inheritance of the Saints in light, "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, "a crown of glory that fadeth not away, fullness of joy in "the presence of God for evermore." Yet in its most awful denunciations it evinces a desire to shew mercy. It speaks the language of terror to lead you to repentance. It denounces judgements that, under the guidance and blessing of God, you may escape them. But, remember, that it speaks no terrors, it denounces no judgements, which shall not be executed on all who persevere in disobedience. If you be not among those who hear the final sentence, "Come, "ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared "for you from the foundation of the world;" you will be of the number of them to whom it is said, "Depart, ye cursed, "into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his "Angels (r)."

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(r) Matthew, xxv. 34. 41.

THE END.

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